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JULY/AUGUST 2004

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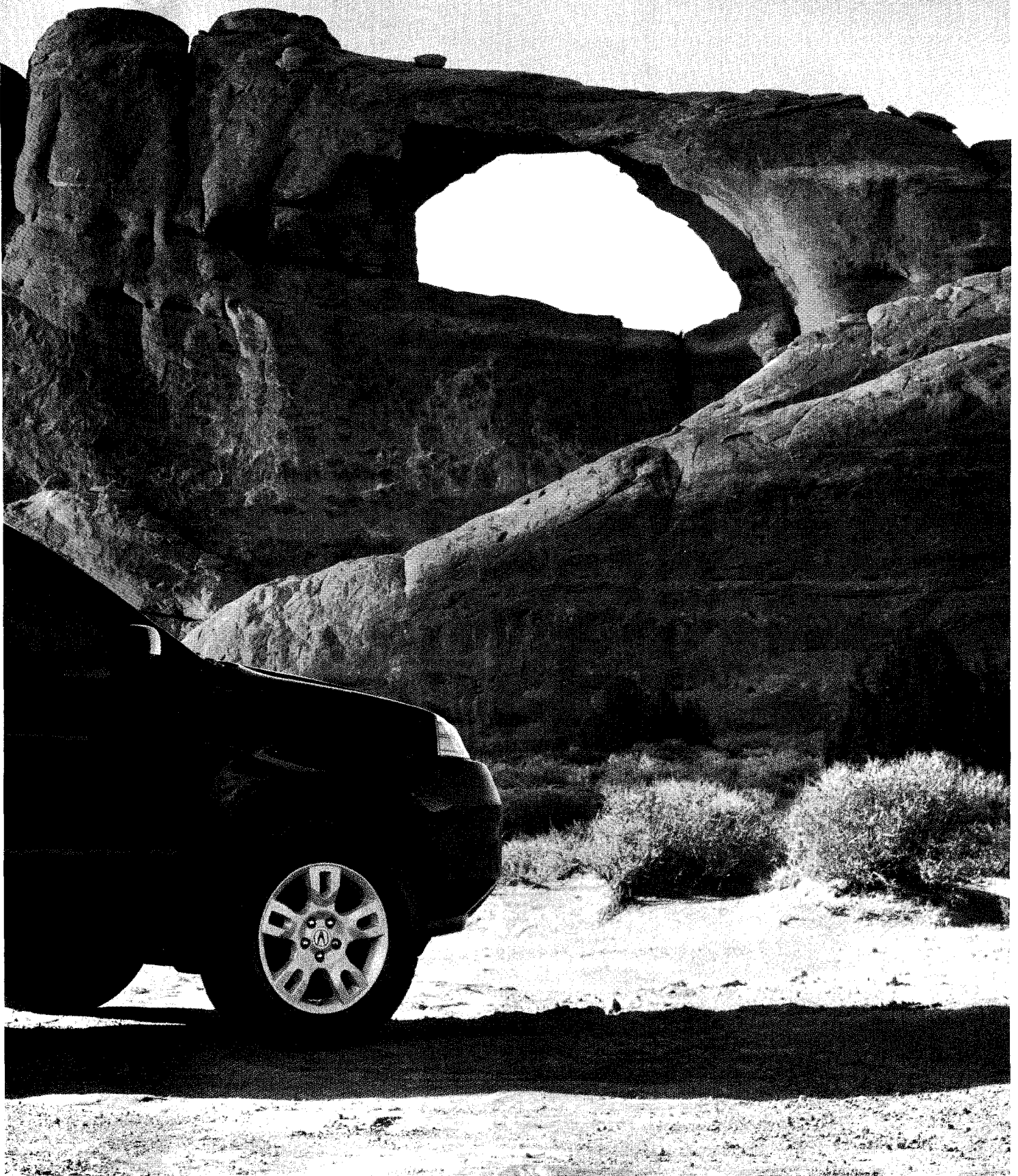
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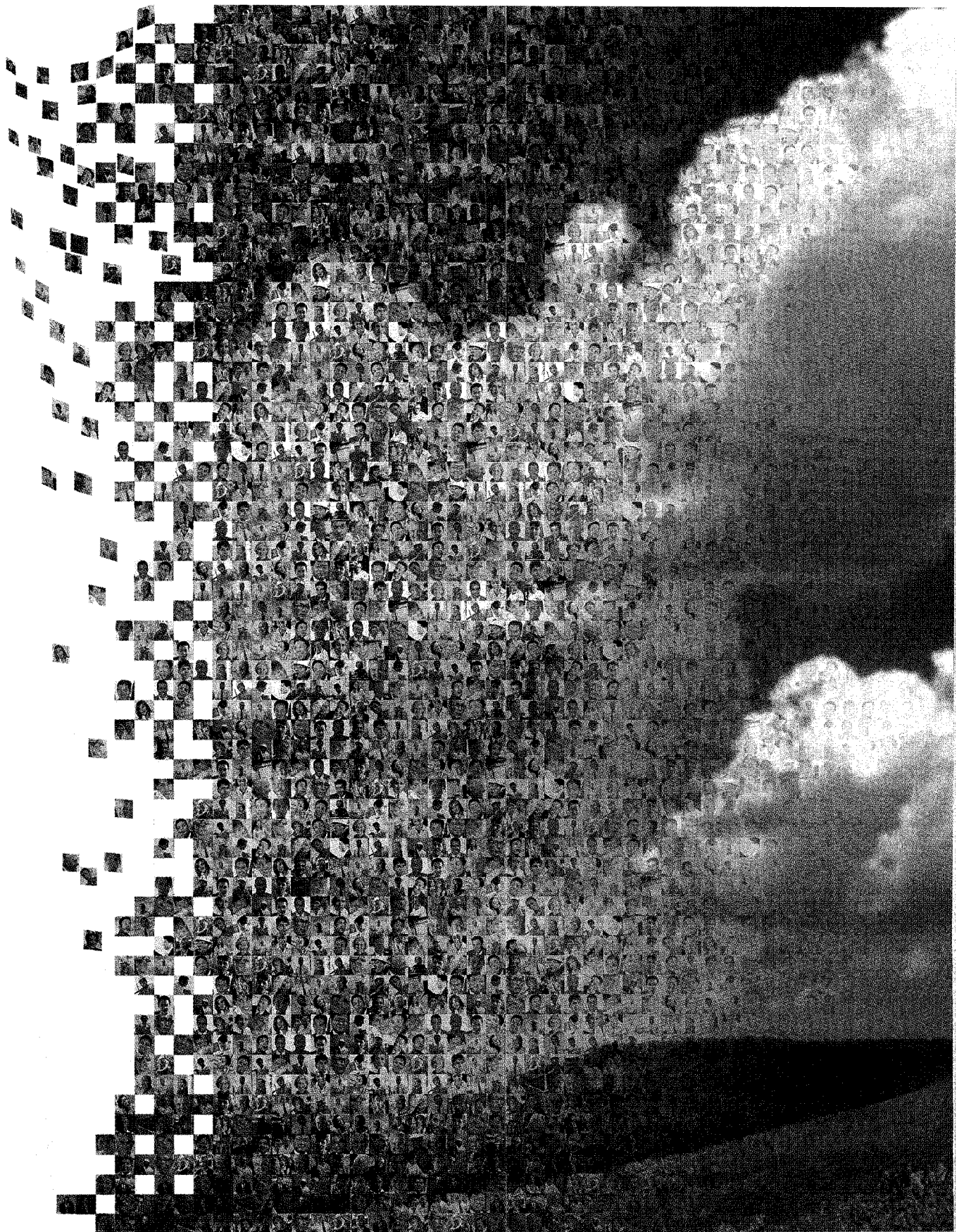
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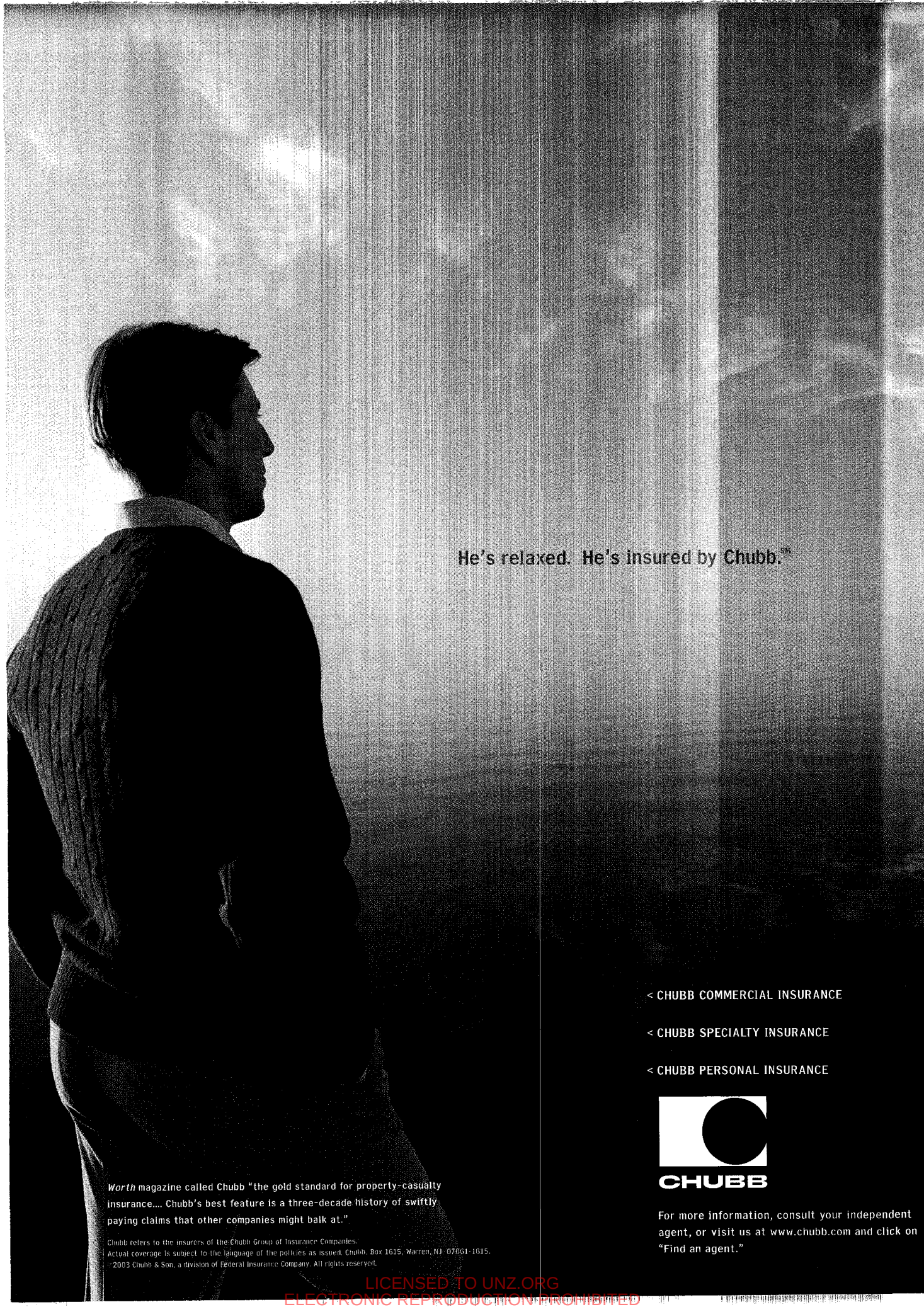


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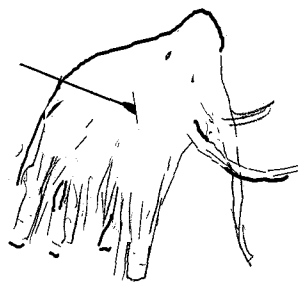
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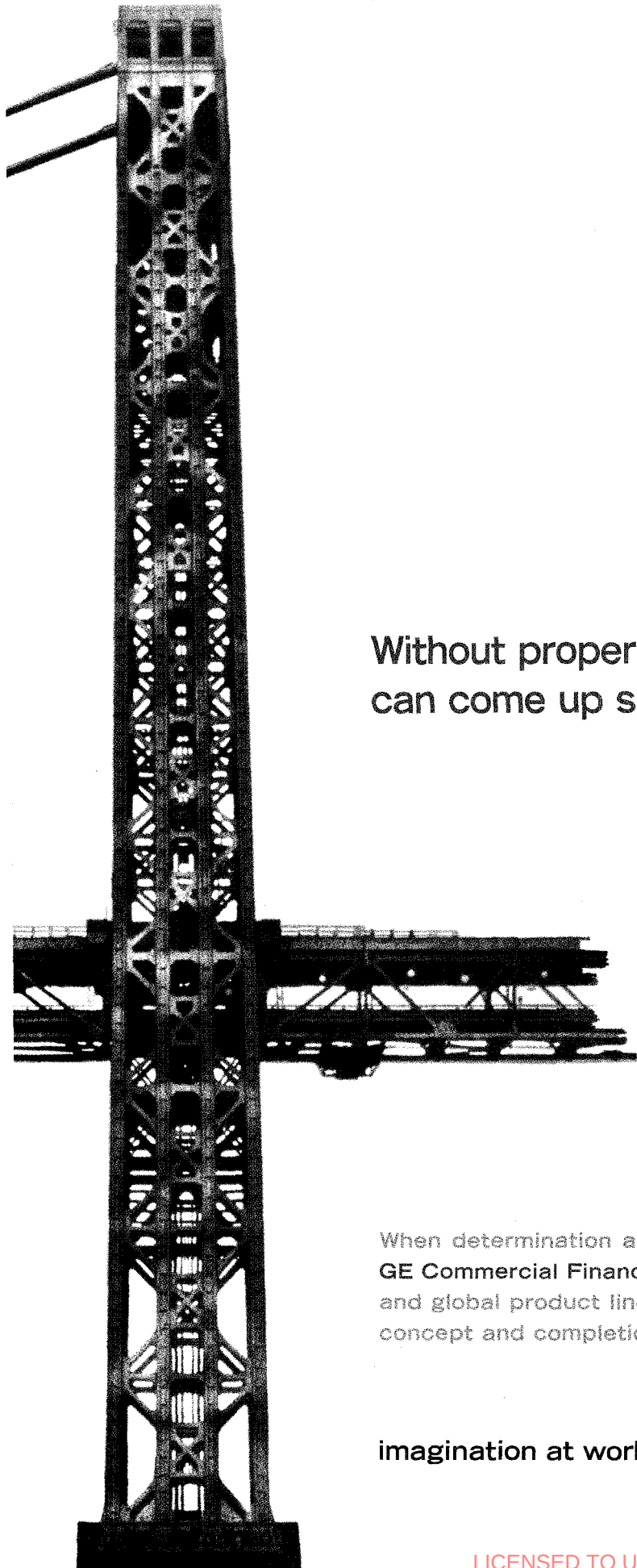
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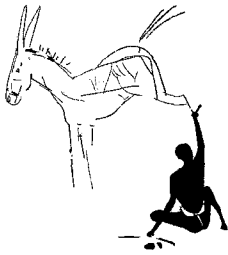


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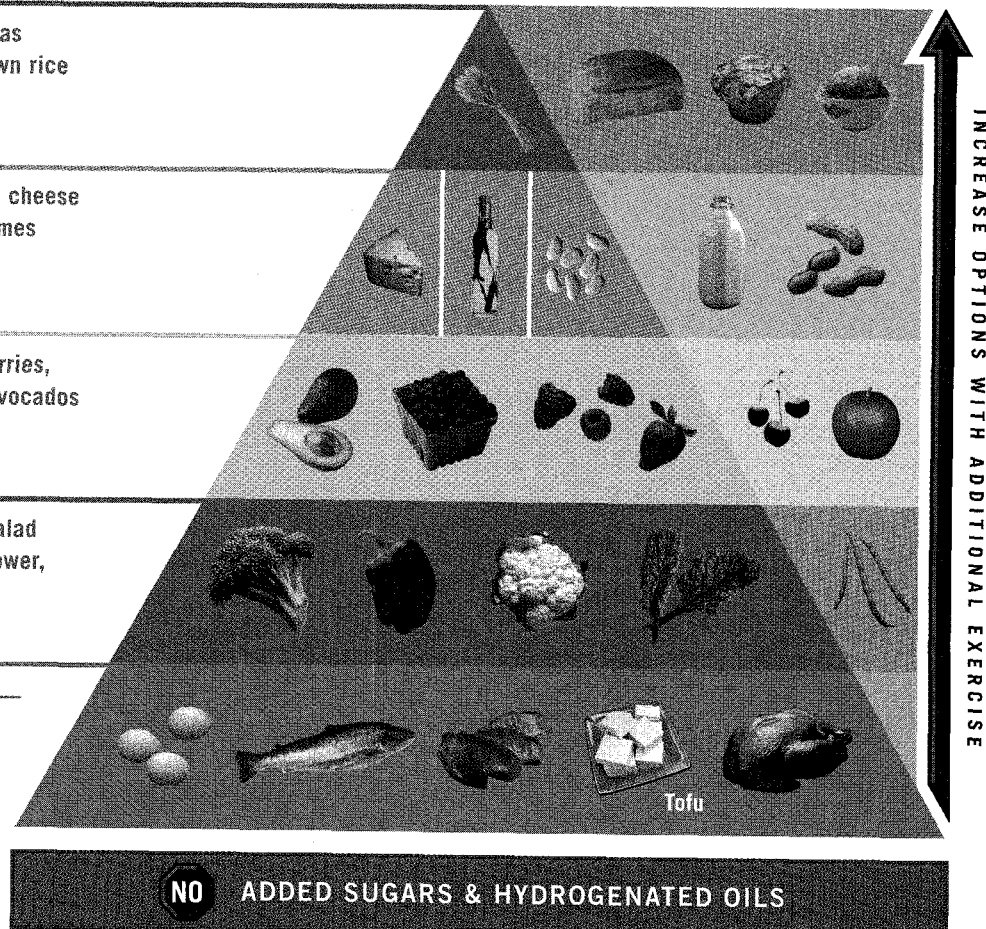
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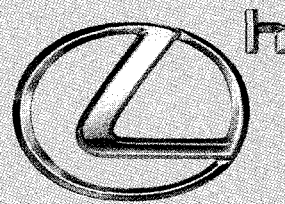
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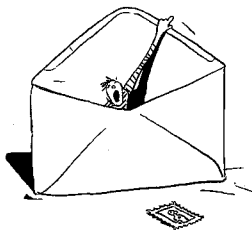
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

My Times

After reading Howell Raines's 21,000-word cover story about his final days at *The New York Times* ("My Times," May *Atlantic*) we felt, as members of a union that represents journalists, morally and ethically obligated not to allow Raines's indictment of the *Times* and the Guild to stand without comment.

Raines places much of the blame for his personal demise, and what he views as the recent decline of the paper of record, on The Newspaper Guild and its sixty-four-year labor relationship with the *Times*.

In Raines's view, the Guild serves as "rush chairman of the culture of complaint" at the *Times*; instills "dysfunctional traits" in new hires; forces senior editors to "testify" at endless grievance hearings; and strong-armed the company into accepting "mindless job guarantees." His categorical statement that "at *The New York Times* we never fired anyone" is absurd, especially since Raines goes on to say that he himself was fired.

Employees can be, and have been, fired by the *Times*, but not without the due process provided under the contract between the Guild and the *Times*. In fact, the Guild-*Times* collective-bargaining agreement includes a "progressive discipline" procedure under which employees can face disciplinary action, "up to and including dismissal." It also provides for binding arbitration should we dispute the dismissal.

The "grievance hearings" Raines refers to are actually sometimes "disciplinary hearings," meetings between *Times* management and the Guild to deal with work-related employee issues, ranging from lateness to job performance. Such meetings are called by the *Times*'s labor-relations department, not by the Guild. Employees are entitled to Guild representation at these meetings.

The meetings seldom go on for hours and are held, when possible, at a time and place convenient for the parties involved. Seldom are top editors involved in such meetings.

Raines invented a hybrid of meetings routinely held between the Guild and the *Times*: the disciplinary meeting and the grievance meeting. Grievance meetings are monthly meetings, usually an hour or two in length, held between the Guild and representatives from the company's labor-relations department to discuss possible violations of the Guild contract and to resolve them, if possible, in a timely fashion in order to avert arbitration. Editors do not attend grievance meetings.

Raines claims that staff members at the *Times* get "tenure for life" after a probationary period of fourteen weeks. The probationary periods for new employees are twelve, fifteen, or twenty-six weeks, depending on job title. Trial periods for reporters, photographers, and copy editors are twenty-six weeks. There are no fourteen-week trial periods. *Times* management has the right to fire an employee at any time during his or her probationary period, without explanation. The Guild cannot challenge such dismissals unless they are discriminatory.

Raines's obvious contempt for the union is misplaced. Together, the Guild and the *Times* have built what even Raines begrudgingly acknowledges is "the world's greatest newspaper." Although Raines has a right to his opinion, the Guild and the 1,500 employees we represent at the *Times* are disappointed that the editors of *The Atlantic Monthly* did not offer their readers a more balanced story.

Barry Lipton
New York Guild President
Lena Williams
Times Guild Unit Chair
New York, N.Y.

Howell Raines makes plenty of assertions that are easy to take issue with, but the fatal one was a misvaluation of the *Times* that, I think, was unavoidable for Howell, given that it was inextricably tied to the self-image that drove his narrative, in *The Atlantic* and at the paper.

He needed a big wrong to right, and this more than anything real led him to conclude that until his arrival as boss, the *Times* was marching toward irrelevance. In fact, the day before he took over, the paper was the best it had ever been in its reporting, writing, range, and graphic display.

That didn't leave much room for a dragon slayer, only for someone who could stand on others' shoulders and work day-to-day to improve something that was already quite excellent. Perhaps that would have led to a better paper, and one that probably would have stood behind its editor when a danger that honorable staff members had been trying to flag caused real damage.

Martin Gottlieb

New York, N.Y.

The writer is currently a special-projects editor at The New York Times and was formerly its deputy culture editor.

It strikes me as rather interesting that Howell Raines laments having found himself "assaulted in other publications with blind quotations attributed to 'senior *Times* employees,' who are usually not within a mile of knowing what's actually going on." Most newspapers, including the *Times* under Raines, have no problem with quoting unnamed "senior Administration officials," "well-placed government sources," and the like. If those anonymous sources are sufficiently credible to be quoted in the *Times*, it is rank hypocrisy for Raines to question other publications' use of similar sources from his own organization.

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Howell Raines endeavors to pull me into his orbit by invoking my desire to get “more, better, faster” from a newsroom. Having never worked for or with him, I can’t speak from experience about his approach to managing a news staff. I imagine our styles differ quite a bit.

My model (and mentor) is his predecessor, Joe Lelyveld, who is deplorably mistreated and inaccurately portrayed in Raines’s assessment of *The New York Times*. Joe’s affection for the *Times* and its staff is deep and genuine. There was no limit to his ambitions for the paper’s journalism. He was the most demanding editor I have known.

I spent slightly more than three years at the *Times*, and I am grateful for every minute that I could learn from a man of such talent, intellect, and integrity. I can only hope to do as much at *The Boston Globe* as Joe Lelyveld did for *The New York Times*.

Martin Baron

*Editor, The Boston Globe
Boston, Mass.*

Howell Raines gives us a rare look into the workings of one of democracy’s most important institutions. He underscores the universal need to change while holding on to fundamentals—clearly not an easy task. I, for one, would hate to lose *The New York Times*, which serves as a baseline for those purporting to reveal the facts and truths in our volatile world. I was left with a sense of the importance of that paper, of the difficulty of the work in progress at the *Times*, and of the need for courageous journalists like Raines.

Tim Welch

Woodland, Wash.

Howell Raines writes, “The reason we weren’t increasing our base, I believed, was that we were ignoring the economic and social realities of many of our readers’ lives.” Maybe so. But the bigger problem is that the *Times* does not know how interesting news is—international news in particular. To use Raines’s words, the *Times* considers world events “eat-your-peas journalism.”

News is interesting. The world is interesting. The *Times*, and the media in general, think they have to find exciting

stories and puff them up. They write about sports and celebrities, thinking that these ephemera are more interesting than what is happening to the world. That is why newspapers are losing readers.

*George Jochnowitz
New York, N.Y.*

Congratulations for having the courage to publish Howell Raines’s account of his history at the *Times*. His story had the feeling of a Greek tragedy to me. Like Icarus, he seems to have flown too close to the sun. Much of Raines’s story involved neither money nor violence but, rather, creative passion and ambition. I’m not sure how much the passion for excellence in journalism is valued these days. We have been “spun” so often by public figures, with the willing assent of the commercial media, that it is hard to believe anybody really cares about truth or quality. I’m glad that *The Atlantic* does, and that Howell Raines does.

Robert L. Ross

Birmingham, Ala.

Howell Raines’s essay was awfully long and densely detailed for breakfast-table reading, but I found it strangely uplifting. I couldn’t put it down.

*Grayce Scholt
Flint, Mich.*

Dean in Iowa

Howard Dean’s pollster, Paul Maslin (“The Front-Runner’s Fall,” *May Atlantic*), reveals an interesting chronology of polling numbers, but fails to identify several crucial reasons for Dean’s “implosion” in Iowa.

As a native Iowan, a veteran of six caucuses, and a Dean county steering-committee member and precinct organizer, I can say with some confidence that the 2004 caucus campaign was quite different from previous ones, and not because Iowa was flooded with out-of-state staffers and volunteers—that ground was broken by Carter, Kennedy, Cranston, Gephardt, and Mondale, although on a smaller scale.

The 2004 caucuses looked different because of the roughly \$100 million in

media advertising that saturated our eyes and ears for months. It dwarfed anything Iowa had seen before, and although an ability to organize at the precinct level remained important, this caucus, more than any other, resembled a primary, especially in its final few weeks. This should have helped a candidate like Dean, who had plenty of cash on hand, but it turned out to be his downfall—simply because Dean’s TV ads during the final week were, well, horrendous.

The ad Maslin refers to at the end of his article—a negative spot repeating Dean’s antiwar stance—didn’t fall short because it engaged Gephardt in a negative tit-for-tat, as Maslin suggests (Gephardt had been up with negative ads for months). It failed because it confirmed what John Kerry had been trying to plant in voters’ minds: that Dean was a one-note candidate incapable of handling a broad range of presidential challenges. That ad had no chance of attracting a single “undecided” voter, which should have been the focus of the final week. It was trumped by possibly the worst closing-week TV ad ever produced for a candidate at any level, which featured a head-and-chest shot of Dean, alone against an antiseptic, artificial white backdrop, as he stared vacantly into the camera and read off the same old script heard thousands of times before. The Kerry and Edwards ads showed vibrant candidates surrounded by swelling, adoring crowds—a devastating contrast. As a local volunteer, I found it heartbreaking to see the twenty-hour days put in by Dean staffers being undermined on a daily basis by their own campaign.

Maslin says the Dean campaign decided early on that it “could probably never win an outright battle of the bios,” and late in his article he highlights how Dean’s demeanor improved and lightened when his wife, Judy, accompanied him. Maslin doesn’t tie the two together, but I see a key connection here that senior advisers in the Dean camp seemed to miss during the campaign. If Judy had been by her husband’s side when he campaigned in Iowa, she might have made a difference. Midwesterners like couples who live simply, and great opportunities

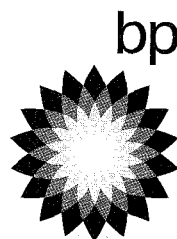
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were lost by not sharing the softer "bio" side of their smallish home and old car. (Two unrelated people in my precinct who had been undecided until caucus day ended up supporting Dean that night because, by chance, they had stumbled across a national news show featuring the Deans' Vermont lifestyle.)

In the end, of course, credit must be given to John Kerry's campaign, which was poised to track, harvest, and turn out new supporters as they moved toward Kerry that final week—as evidenced by the nightly electronic phone call to our home asking us to identify ourselves as new Kerry supporters.

*Dennis Harbaugh
Waterloo, Iowa*

Paul Maslin's account of Dean's campaign mirrors the bitterness of the Iowa cold during the pre-caucus weekend. I agree that the volunteers (including me) spoke with campaign-weary Iowans. They participated in a very competitive election process. These volunteers cannot, however, be characterized as "a bunch of kids in orange hats." They were Vietnam veterans, students, retirees, employed and unemployed professionals, and at-home parents. I volunteered not as a "Deaniac" but because I wished to support a campaign that stated clear ways of addressing many of America's challenges. I only hope that future attempts at active, diverse participation in political processes will not be ridiculed.

*Laura Cochrane
St. Louis, Mo.*

As someone who worked on Governor Howard Dean's presidential campaign, I read Paul Maslin's piece in your May issue with great interest. Having worked for Governor Dean for more than fourteen years, I can attest that Maslin was correct when he cited Dean's "loose tongue" and "overall stubbornness in refusing to be scripted, to be disciplined."

However, unlike Maslin, I believe that it is acceptable—and refreshing—for a candidate to be guided by his own thoughts, words, and beliefs, rather than those dictated to him by a consultant. From the point of view of a political

consultant, a candidate who thinks for himself must be frustrating.

Maslin contends that Dean's unwillingness to be programmed by paid consultants contributed to the campaign's failure. I believe just the contrary: that Dean's desire to stay true to himself was the success of his campaign.

I believe that the biggest failure of the Dean campaign was that some of the people involved lost sight of what the campaign was really all about.

*Kate O'Connor
Winooski, Vt.*

Paul Maslin replies:

Dennis Harbaugh makes an important point about how Iowa had changed from the purely organizational test of a caucus to a more primary-like campaign dominated by paid media. I also concur that the final Dean ad didn't work, though I believe that the Iowa result was set in motion by the events I described, including our decision to engage the war with Gephardt and Co. earlier that week. Our advertising in Iowa, whether effective or not, describes anything but a "one-note candidate"—in fact, numerous ads dealt with the economy, health care, the role of the special interests, the budget deficit, tax cuts, and so forth. As to the Deans, I couldn't agree more about their effectiveness—but the decision to highlight the two of them was largely out of the campaign's top strategists' hands.

I certainly didn't mean to ridicule the Stormers, nor did the governor. I described them as "mostly young," which I believe to be accurate, though Laura Cochrane correctly points out that they were a diverse group. I hope their impact on the 2004 election will not be forgotten or dismissed, and that most will continue their efforts to change America.

I agree with Kate O'Connor that Governor Dean's unscriptedness was both acceptable and refreshing. Much of the success of his campaign stemmed from his desire to "stay true to himself." I knew from the beginning of my involvement with Howard Dean—when I first met him, in February of 2003—that he was always going to speak his mind. And that trait did also get him into trouble and did frustrate those of us in the campaign. To pretend otherwise by establishing a false dichotomy between paid consultants out to program him and others who presumably never "lost sight of what

the campaign was really all about" is to describe a campaign and a campaign dynamic that didn't exist.

Knifed

Scott Stossel ("Knifed," May *Atlantic*) asserts that Sargent Shriver would have been Vice President Hubert Humphrey's running mate on the 1968 Democratic ticket had Shriver's Kennedy in-laws, and specifically Senator Edward Kennedy, not warned Humphrey off selecting him. Stossel reveals conversations and initiatives involving a number of Democrats around the subject of Shriver's nomination.

As Humphrey's assistant, I spent most of his waking hours with him during 1968, and was involved in almost all his activities and decisions. This is what happened regarding his running mate.

Humphrey was approached dozens of times on the subject. Southern governors pressed hard for Texas Governor John Connally, whom Humphrey viewed with distaste. Senator Fred Harris, who with Senator Walter Mondale had co-chaired Humphrey's nominating campaign, launched a mini-campaign in his own behalf. New Jersey Governor Richard Hughes also campaigned actively. An intermediary suggested that New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, a Republican with well-known contempt for Richard Nixon, was interested. Shriver sent a handwritten letter from Paris asking Humphrey to consider him and pledging fundraising help for the campaign. Humphrey, as Stossel relates, spoke with Senator Kennedy about his own possible interest in the vice-presidential nomination. In discussing his conversation with Kennedy, Humphrey mentioned only Kennedy's pledge to support his candidacy.

Late on the evening before he was to choose his running mate, Humphrey got a rubdown in his hotel room while conferring with his attorney and former legislative assistant, Max Kampelman; his longtime administrative assistant Bill Connell; and me. He asked each of us for our preference. Kampelman favored Shriver—who would later join Kampelman's law firm. Connell, surprisingly, favored Harris, with whom he had often

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been in conflict during Humphrey's nominating campaign. I favored Senator Ed Muskie. We knew Humphrey liked and respected all three men. He gave us no signal and went to bed.

At seven the next morning Humphrey asked if I still favored Muskie. I said I did, although I counseled late consideration of Senator Eugene McCarthy as well. Humphrey quickly dismissed that option. "Frankly, I've wanted Muskie for quite some time," Humphrey said. "Go find him in the hotel and I'll make him the offer"—which he did.

Four years later, as policy director of Senator George McGovern's campaign, I participated in that ill-starred vice-presidential selection process too. After McGovern's initial selection of Senator Tom Eagleton, and an embarrassingly long search to find a replacement when he dropped out, Shriver became McGovern's running mate. As in everything he did, Shriver soldiered on with enthusiasm, optimism, and good humor. No Kennedy cabal blocked his nomination in 1968, any more than one facilitated it in 1972.

*Ted Van Dyk
Seattle, Wash.*

"Knifed" contains the following paragraph:

"In addition, by far the most pressing issue on most voters' minds was Vietnam. If Shriver had been on the ticket and had carried through with his plan to press for a negotiated peace—a plan concocted with the help of Harriman and Vance, the negotiators themselves—who knows how many additional votes might have gone Humphrey's way?"

The suggestion that a Humphrey-Shriver ticket might have won the 1968 election leaves out one important fact: the President of the United States until noon on January 20, 1969, was Lyndon B. Johnson. President Johnson, who had been negotiating with the North Vietnamese in Paris, through his ambassadors W. Averell Harriman and Cyrus R. Vance, since May of 1968, kept close tabs on what Humphrey was saying in public about the Vietnam negotiations during the campaign.

Transcripts in the LBJ Library, in Austin, Texas, of a number of telephone

conversations between Johnson and Humphrey during this period show this. For example, when Humphrey, in a September 30 speech in Salt Lake City, pledged to halt the bombing in North Vietnam, Johnson telephoned Humphrey and closely questioned him about what conditions he would require for such a halt, to make sure they were compatible with his negotiating position.

The conditions for a bombing halt were the key issue. North Vietnam demanded an unconditional halt. Johnson had instructed Harriman and Vance to get the North Vietnamese negotiators to accept a number of conditions, the details of which need not concern us here. Suffice it to say that by late October, Johnson was sufficiently satisfied with the negotiations to go ahead and order the bombing halt a few days before the election.

The paragraph quoted above contains speculation of the worst kind—the kind that is not supported by facts. To suggest that Harriman and Vance would have disregarded their orders from the President and torpedoed Johnson's peace effort by urging a Humphrey-Shriver ticket to accept North Vietnam's demand for an unconditional bombing halt is to suggest that these two loyal public servants would have put partisan political advantage above the interests of the country. That is irresponsible.

*Arthur J. Dommen
Bethesda, Md.*

Scott Stossel suggests that Sargent Shriver's presence on the 1968 ticket might have thrown the presidential election into the House of Representatives. This is a long stretch at best.

Senator Edmund Muskie was chosen over Shriver as a vice-presidential candidate because, as Christopher Beam, of the Muskie Archives at Bates College, said, "Vice President Humphrey felt that Senator Muskie had a broader appeal to Democrats, especially centrist Democrats, than Mr. Shriver. The Vice President liked the fact that Senator Muskie would come across as reassuring and steady—which he did."

"Knifed" also fails to address a point that Stossel no doubt covers in other sections of his book. Sargent Shriver

was the Democratic vice-presidential candidate in the 1972 election, to which many refer as Nixon 49–America 1. Larry O'Brien, the chair of the Democratic Party, and a *genuine* native son of the "1," once reluctantly acknowledged, "We probably would have taken Massachusetts no matter what."

Finally, if Humphrey did not choose Shriver for fear of Kennedy-family dissent, he may have underestimated the unifying power of one of the most formidable of the Kennedys: Eunice Kennedy Shriver.

*Dan Doyle
West Hartford, Conn.*

Scott Stossel's excellent insights into the life and career of Sargent Shriver are a long-overdue reminder about the effect of religion, ethnicity, and other cultural factors in the lives of the Kennedys and their extended family.

In reviewing the secret papers of Joseph P. Kennedy now available at the JFK Library, I, too, was struck by the positive influence of Shriver on the Kennedys. He was that increasingly rare breed—a Catholic liberal. Not only was Shriver instrumental in the success of the Peace Corps, but he played a significant role in influencing JFK's views on race relations, the threat of communism, issues of social justice, and how to deal with the anti-Catholic bigotry of the 1960 campaign. Unfortunately, too many histories of this era are written by secular "melting-pot" assimilationists who tend to ignore or are disinclined to assess how these powerful forces affected the thinking of the Kennedys and their contemporaries. Part of the reason is also that JFK and his father wanted to project an "all-American" image to gain acceptance in a nation that still has yet to elect another person from a minority group. But the cultural influence of religion, ethnicity, and a sense of family within the Kennedys can be found in letters, diaries, and oral histories now available in our national archives, and Stossel's work performs a genuine service in this reappraisal of history.

In the current election year, when the incumbent talks about his God in relation to invading Iraq and the other party's candidate is being shunned by his

own church hierarchy because of his views on abortion, isn't it about time that American historians more fully engaged these cultural factors in their assessment of presidential "character" and behavior?

Thomas Maier

Author, *The Kennedys: America's*

Emerald Kings

E. Northport, N.Y.

Scott Stossel replies:

I am grateful to Ted Van Dyk for providing additional behind-the-scenes details about how Hubert Humphrey ended up selecting Edmund Muskie (rather than Sargent Shriver or another) as his running mate in 1968. And I agree that it was not a Kennedy "cabal" that blocked Shriver's nomination in 1968—the Kennedy family and its closest supporters were too much in disarray after Robert Kennedy's death to form anything as conspiratorial as a cabal. Nevertheless, many former RFK aides still felt embittered toward Shriver for having declined to campaign for Kennedy that spring, and they made no secret of that fact. That was a political reality Humphrey had to contend with when he made his vice-presidential selection—and a number of Humphrey and Shriver intimates remain convinced that the "Kennedy factor" influenced Humphrey's decision to select Muskie.

I did not mean to say, as Arthur Dommen suggests, that Vance and Harriman—in cahoots with Shriver and Humphrey—would have freelanced an unconstitutional peace plan for partisan gain. Vance and Harriman's primary interest was in achieving a peace settlement in Vietnam; any partisan concern they had was only that a Nixon Administration would undo any progress toward that end. But if Humphrey had selected Shriver as his running mate, Shriver might have extended an olive branch to the anti-war protesters at the convention; Shriver's relationship with Vance and Harriman would have given this more dovish stance credibility, and it would have won the ticket many votes.

Finally, Dan Doyle is certainly correct about one thing: Eunice Kennedy Shriver was (and remains) the most formidable of all the Kennedys. In fact, when George McGovern asked Humphrey for advice about whom he should select as a running mate in 1972, Humphrey told him he should choose Sarge—because he came with Eunice, the Democrats' secret weapon.

Tony Blair's Character

Geoffrey Wheatcroft's denigration of Tony Blair's character ("The Tragedy of Tony Blair," June *Atlantic*) should not go unchallenged. I am a Liberal Democrat, not a member of Blair's party. I was opposed to the Iraq War mainly because I did not believe we were threatened by weapons of mass destruction and I feared chaos after Saddam was overthrown. I therefore share Wheatcroft's view that Blair made a tragic mistake. However, Wheatcroft's main charge, that Blair set out deliberately to mislead the people about his reasons for going to war, does not stand up.

We all benefit from hindsight about weapons of mass destruction. But as Kenneth Pollack pointed out in "Spies, Lies, and Weapons: What Went Wrong" (January/February *Atlantic*), just about everyone believed the weapons existed before the inspectors went back into Iraq—not only the Americans and the British, but the French, the Germans, the Israelis, the Russians, and the Chinese. President Jacques Chirac referred to Iraq's probable possession of WMD as late as February of 2003. They all turned out to be wrong—but that did not make them liars. Had I been privy to the same intelligence information, my skepticism, too, might have been shaken.

The Hutton inquiry into the circumstances of the suicide of a Ministry of Defence official, which also covered allegations of deception by the government, cleared Blair of duplicity. Wheatcroft dismisses its report. It was "greeted with derision," he writes, by public and journalists alike. So it was: it had a very bad press. But the judge, Lord Hutton, whose report was declared by the press to be a whitewash, and who was then derided as a government stooge, was regarded very differently before he declared his verdict. Previously everyone had said that he was respected, utterly independent, very careful to be guided by the evidence. Indeed, his record in Northern Ireland, where he had released IRA defendants (whom he abhorred) if evidence against them was inconclusive or illegally obtained, bore this out. He had never allowed prejudice or government pressure to interfere with his as-

essment of evidence. After the verdict of the inquiry, attitudes toward the judge changed. The verdict was not what the media expected or wanted: having carefully examined the evidence, the judge found in favor of Blair and the government and against allegations made by a BBC reporter.

Wheatcroft refers to "minor inaccuracies" in the BBC story that led to the tragic death of the official, Dr. Kelly, and the Hutton inquiry. They were not "minor inaccuracies" but allegations that the government knew claims in a vital intelligence dossier were wrong and inserted them deliberately to mislead the public. What could have been a graver charge? Hutton unequivocally found that the allegations were untrue. Wheatcroft also writes that the BBC broadcast was "far too early in the morning for anyone to have heard it," and implies that it should have been ignored. He does not mention the fact that the allegation that the British government had lied went all around the world. So much for minor inaccuracies in an unimportant broadcast.

Wheatcroft implies that Blair was responsible for Kelly's death, because Kelly was unable to withstand the pressure after Downing Street "smears." Hutton explicitly found that although the release of Kelly's name was handled clumsily, his name was bound to become public, and the government could not be blamed for his death. Wheatcroft's account of the Kelly affair reeks of anti-Blair prejudice and completely conflicts with the judge's findings.

The fact is that Hutton robbed the media of their quarry. He committed the unpardonable crime of finding that the government and Blair did not lie and did not deliberately lead the country into war by making up claims they knew were false. How dare he go by the evidence and contradict a self-evident truth? Surely we all know that politicians (unlike our lily-white press) always lie.

Public disillusionment with politics in Britain and low voter turnout in the most recent election are partly due, as Wheatcroft points out, to excessive spin by government that has proved deeply counterproductive. But this is not the first government to use spin. Nor is spin the same as lying. However, the media

themselves have fostered much of the disillusionment. When Blair first became Prime Minister, the press hugely overpraised his strengths and virtues; now he is derided far beyond his weaknesses and vices. To criticize his policy does not require impugning his motives. Skeptical and critical journalism plays a vital role in democracy. Cynicism and wild accusations about lying in high places, made without justification, can only undermine it.

Dick Taverne
House of Lords
London, England

Geoffrey Wheatcroft replies:

I am grateful to Lord Taverne for his lengthy letter, but I am also puzzled by it. He begins by apparently contradicting himself. He didn't believe in the threat from Iraq that Tony Blair alleged, but neither does he believe that Blair "deliberately" misled his country. Since most British people are now agreed that we were taken into war on false pretenses, the only argument here would seem to be about the Prime Minister's mens rea, as lawyers say—his conscious state of mind.

Attributing motive is said to be bad manners, and is certainly dangerous; none of us can confidently reckon to understand the deepest workings of another mind (or perhaps even of our own). Hence the mistake of Andrew Gilligan in his BBC report, which was to say not only that the government's claims were false but that ministers knew they were false. That was rash and unprovable. But then the Prime Minister's conscious veracity or sincerity is unverifiable the other way as well. For what it's worth, I don't think of Blair as a "liar"—not like most of us, in the sense that we have from time to time knowingly uttered falsehoods. As I tried to suggest in my essay, he is something more dangerous: a man with a tenuous grasp on objective reality and an unusual capacity for believing what he wants to believe. I adduced some alarming examples to this effect. In the present matter it is obvious that Blair wanted to believe that Iraq possessed noxious weapons and posed a "serious and current" danger, because he was committed to war in any case.

Nor did I allege that Blair was responsible for David Kelly's suicide, although I thought and think that the manner in which Downing Street forced Kelly's name into the open was disgusting. It was also a frighten-

ing example of the Blair government's obsession with presentation and process, and its absurd priorities. Even those sympathetic to Blair were startled to discover the degree to which, during a grave national crisis, the innermost circle at Downing Street was obsessed for weeks on end, and almost to the exclusion of anything else, by a footling vendetta with the BBC.

Of course opponents of the Blair government were hoping that Lord Hutton would condemn the government, and were annoyed that he didn't. But that isn't the point at all. Over months in open court Hutton had heard many millions of words of evidence that were published daily and (for the first time in our backward little island) posted on the Internet. Thus it was that not only those who covered the hearings but also most of the public thought that Hutton's conclusions were weirdly at variance with what he had heard. Does Dick Taverne suppose that is inherently impossible? Or does he believe that every single judge in every court or inquiry in history has come to a correct verdict?

Let me take one single example that illuminates a much wider theme. This May, and to widespread outrage, Blair appointed as head of the intelligence agency MI6 John Scarlett, formerly the chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee. Thanks to the Hutton inquiry, we learned that Scarlett had worked inside Downing Street, hand-in-glove with Alastair Campbell (who called him "my mate"—about the most shocking words Hutton heard). In his own evidence to Hutton, Scarlett loyally defended the government's (and his own) conduct over the preparation of the WMD dossiers, and Hutton took him at his word, though adding, risibly, that Scarlett might have been "subconsciously" influenced by a desire to please the government. Even on the day Scarlett testified, the government gleefully insisted that he had exculpated it.

That evening Sir Malcolm Rifkind appeared on television and grasped the nub of the matter, speaking with great forensic skill and also with the authority of a former Defence Secretary and Foreign Secretary. Far from exculpating Downing Street, he said, Scarlett's evidence was gravely incriminating, showing as it did the degree to which under this government the intelligence services have been politicized and even corrupted. The services used to take high professional pride in their detachment and honesty, garnering and assessing intelligence that was then furnished

to ministers at arm's length and, in another favorite phrase, with "a health warning," emphasizing how incomplete any such material must be. As Rifkind perceived, what had happened in the case of Iraq and WMD was back to front: a political decision had been taken first, and then the intelligence services were recruited like an advertising agency to provide a persuasive case.

It did not need the latest miserable developments in Iraq to disillusion the public, and no conspiracy theories are required to understand this story: as Aneurin Bevan used to say, why peer into the crystal ball when you can read the book? And Lord Taverne's haughty rebuke about impugning Tony Blair's motives is misplaced. As I write, several people who were once warmly admiring friends of the Prime Minister's have been saying that it's time for him to go, and the latest polls suggest that Blair, once his party's great asset, is now a liability, and that Labour would do much better at the next election under another leader. To attribute this to malevolent media is grossly to flatter our powers. Nothing I could ever write would create anything like as much public cynicism about our rulers as their own conduct has done.

The Case Against Perfection

Michael J. Sandel's article "The Case Against Perfection" (April *Atlantic*) was quite interesting and well balanced with pros and cons. One thing, however, should be pointed out: the rare but distinct possibility of inadvertent incest through donated eggs and sperm. Let's say a brilliant, tall, talented woman in Illinois donates eggs to a couple in Massachusetts and a couple in Connecticut. The Massachusetts baby is a brilliant, tall, and talented boy who grows up and goes to Harvard. The Connecticut baby is a brilliant, tall, and talented girl who grows up and goes to Harvard. They meet in student government and find they have nearly everything in common, including participation in the same sports. They fall in love, they get married, and they get pregnant. Is this inbreeding? Aren't these two children siblings? And if it is inbreeding, couldn't the "bettering" of our children through sperm and egg donation from perfect specimens (the six-foot brown-eyed blond

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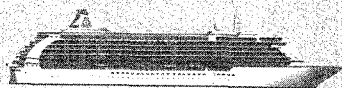
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donor from the article comes to mind) perhaps lead to the ultimate dumbing down of our society?

*Dina Weiss
Marlton, N.J.*

Michael Sandel falls into the tradition of preachers who oppose material improvement in our lives for fear it will endanger our souls. His arguments are no better than those of his predecessors. Of course mastery over one's circumstances may give rise to arrogance and intolerance, just as lack of such mastery may give rise to bitterness and defeatism. Sandel gives no reason to suppose that the former scenario is more likely than the latter. And his fear that "perfect genetic control would erode ... solidarity" by making the genetically well-endowed consider the genetically poorly endowed responsible for their own shortcomings invites the following objection: in a society with *perfect* genetic control no one would have to be genetically poorly endowed, whereas in a (much more likely) society with increased but limited control we would still have, and be recognized as having, natural failings that were beyond our control.

*Felicia Ackerman
Providence, R.I.*

Others have taken Professor Sandel to task for attempting to write religious views into national policy. I would argue that his theology, too, is flawed.

Sandel is concerned with our remaining "open to the unbidden." His argument could just as easily be applied to humanity's quest to live in houses instead of caves, to live long healthy lives instead of short diseased ones, or to chart the courses of the heavens. The history of mankind is one of hostility to the unbidden. I find our series of victories in that battle morally uplifting.

It seems to me that genetic engineering is essential to continuing the progress of humanity. We cannot get to the stars, for example, without the longer life-span that genetic engineering promises. What God would give us the means to explore the universe and then expect us not to use it?

I'd like to suggest that our genetic

makeup is not the Last Great Mystery, the solving of which will close us forever to the unbidden. It is simply the latest in a never-ending series of mysteries that humanity will face and conquer.

The unbidden will always be with us. But I find the struggle against it ennobling and inspiring. Has Sandel considered the possibility that humanity's refusal to accept the uncontrolled as uncontrollable is in fact morally virtuous?

*Barry Fagin
Colorado Springs, Colo.*

From a disabled-people's-rights perspective, "The Case Against Perfection" is problematic. Michael Sandel's line of ethical reasoning leads him to the popular but untenable and discriminatory approach of rejecting the use of human genetic engineering for social reasons (trait selection and enhancement) but allowing it for medical reasons (preventing and curing disease).

This approach assumes that there is an objective way to define "disease," "defect," "illness," and "trait." But these concepts are social constructs. For example, being gay is viewed by some people as a genetic trait, by some as a lifestyle, and by some as a disease. Sandel's claim that spina bifida and Down syndrome are genetic abnormalities is contested by many people with these characteristics.

Sandel's assumption is that genetic enhancements are social rather than medical in nature. This does not hold true. Many somatic as well as germline genetic enhancements can be medical in nature: adding an AIDS-resistance gene to a person's genetic makeup, if one were to become available, would certainly be considered a medical intervention, not a social enhancement.

Sandel's reasoning also allows for the use of nongenetic medical enhancements. Amputees are sometimes seen as defective. If better-than-normal (bionic) artificial legs become available, we can't tell an amputee to be satisfied with conventional prosthetic legs, because all artificial legs, whether bionic or plastic, could be considered medical devices.

If people with disabilities are allowed to enjoy—or, in many cases, are forced to



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enjoy—entirely new abilities or incremental improvements of normal abilities, others—such as the nondisabled transhumanists—will want to follow suit, augmenting their bodies to become the best that they can be.

A two-tiered ethical reasoning that approves interventions on medical but not social grounds, which has so far increased disability discrimination, can't stop the quest for perfection and actually allows it to continue, because it perpetuates the alignment of nonperfection with ill health. The best way to stop the quest for perfection is to support the nonperfect by accepting diversity of ability and body structure in the framework of cultural diversity; by supporting those who choose not to be fixed to a norm or enhanced above a norm; and by promoting social structures that accept and support people as they are.

*Gregor Wolbring
Calgary, Alberta*

Michael Sandel argues that we should not use genetic engineering to make our children better because children are gifts from God. If we choose some of their traits, we lose that sense of gift. Any ethical argument uses criteria outside the basic facts of a case in order to judge those facts. Sandel uses religion to judge science. This is certainly a valid approach. However, his reasoning could be turned against itself to make a case against religion.

Sandel's argument is as old as Adam: If you explore this area, you will threaten God's domain. If you eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, you will make God jealous and God will punish you. Prometheus must not bring down fire to men. Pandora must not open the box. Oedipus' crimes are patricide and incest, but his sin is hubris. The cry is "You may go this far and no further."

But human beings bite the apple, they come to the fire, they open the box—this story, too, is as old as Adam. It's what makes us human. This is how we dominate the world without fangs or claws. We study, we learn, we apply.

We already try to control who our children will become: prenatal music, the latest child-development theory, the right preschool, ballet, tennis, violin, soc-

cer. Despite this, children become who they uniquely become. Parents who give a child a genetic talent for music may find that their child doesn't like band. Not even the most determined parents are now able to fit their children into molds. Sandel is guilty of scientific hubris if he thinks that tinkering around with a couple of elements of the human genome will keep children from becoming whoever they darn well please.

But if genetic engineering tempts parents to deny the freedom of their children to develop their own identities, then genetic engineering is being used unethically. Like the rest of science, it is not inherently ethical or unethical; the ethics come in the application.

*Thomas M. Thurston
Oakland, Calif.*

"The Case Against Perfection" is an impressive attempt to find an unassailable objection to human "enhancement" through genetic engineering, drugs, and other forms of torturing nature. As a professor of political philosophy, I appreciate the way Sandel sorts through our various feelings in search of the real reason for our uneasiness. It is the potential death of the awareness of "giftedness," the idea that some things in life come to us unbidden and we must simply learn to live with them. I am persuaded by him that it is at least partly our given imperfections that enliven our sense of charity and forgiveness and make us human.

As a mother, I was deeply moved by Sandel's treatment of "hyperparenting," attention-deficit disorder, and the increasing use of Ritalin and other drugs to enhance our children's performance. Sandel is absolutely right in identifying the attitude toward our children that aspires to turn them into perfect automata. People want "designer children" with or without genetic engineering.

When the United States consumes upwards of 90 percent of the world's Ritalin, there is much unnecessary drug use on normal children. More and more often children with behavior problems, learning problems, or even an excess of creativity or intelligence are seen as abnormal, defective, in need of heavy-handed "fixing." We can't just try to

figure out a way to help Johnny (and his parents) cope better. We have to "evaluate" Johnny, label him with a brain disorder, give him therapy, and medicate him, not for Johnny's immediate or long-term happiness but for his academic performance, his test scores, his career prospects, and—unfortunately, it must be said—sometimes for the convenience of adults. Certainly it is not for Johnny's potential to give back to society, if some of the great artists, writers, and inventors of the past, many of them dysfunctional by today's standards, are to be consulted as evidence.

*Laurie M. Johnson Bagby
Manhattan, Kans.*

Michael J. Sandel gives us all the right reasons for seeing eugenics and boutique genetic engineering as wrong. But to rely on our good nature or moral conscience to guide us through a future of mind-numbing scientific advances is, I fear, a little naive.

With the prospect of birthing superchildren who will more than justify the tens of thousands of dollars some Manhattan parents already spend on preschool tuition, it will take more than moral or religious references to discourage genetic architecture. Similarly, for the elderly able to afford it, a proven modern Fountain of Youth will have greater appeal than a slow go into that good night.

If there's a way to manipulate destiny on one side of an equation and to profit by it on the other, we can be sure it will take comprehensive legislation and a sharp lookout for violators to prevent it from happening.

*Michael E. Zuller
Great Neck, N.Y.*

Editors' Note:

In "The Case Against Perfection," Michael J. Sandel devoted two paragraphs to a description of two sperm banks in California. Some of the information about the sperm banks was drawn from a series of articles by David Plotz, about the Repository for Germinal Choice, which appeared in the online magazine Slate. Plotz's work should have been cited, and we regret the oversight. Readers interested in Plotz's series can find it at <http://slate.msn.com/id/100331>.

Israeli Outrage

I greatly appreciate Benjamin Schwarz's extensive review of Benny Morris's exploration of the circumstances of the Palestinian exodus in *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (New & Noteworthy, April *Atlantic*). But I was surprised by Schwarz's assertion that Israelis "were shattered by, or furiously denied," Morris's earlier evidence of "Israeli atrocities and massacres" that had accompanied the birth of Israel. Such reaction was certainly nowhere in evidence in the 1970s and 1980s, when I covered Israel for *Newsweek* magazine.

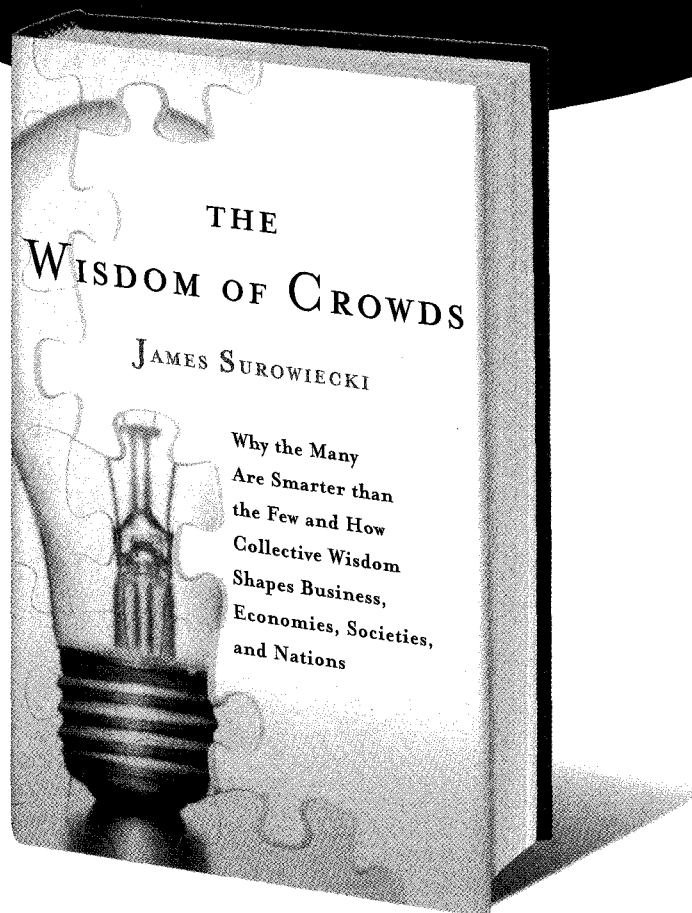
For example, Menachem Begin, the former leader of the Irgun Zvai Leumi, had publicly claimed that the massacre at Deir Yassin—where his gunmen killed more than a hundred Arab civilians—performed an important service for Israel by triggering the flight of thousands of others. After he was elected Israel's Prime Minister, in 1975, I asked him how he felt about his activities as the Irgun leader, which included the bombing of the King David Hotel, in Jerusalem. Begin answered that had he done anything less, he "would now be deeply ashamed." As far as I could tell, no Israeli eyebrows went up when the interview was published.

In 1983 Israel's Comptroller General charged that 71 percent of the privately arranged acquisitions of land by Jewish settlers in the West Bank were marred by "irregularities." Among the alleged illegal practices of Israeli land dealers and lawyers was the hiring of thugs who forced Palestinian peasants at gunpoint to sign away their holdings; the use of forged powers of attorney to sell the assets of absentee Arab landowners to Jews; and the hiring of Arab straw men to buy Palestinian properties that were immediately resold to the government at ten times the purchase price. Outright land theft was so brazen that in one instance cited by the Comptroller, a West Bank settlement continued to sell lots for Jewish housing construction despite formal complaints by 109 Arabs that the land in question was registered as their property.

When Israeli newspapers called for a police investigation, Yitzhak Shamir,

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Israel's Prime Minister, protested at a meeting of his Likud Party that the Israeli police "must consider national interests." Referring to the Labor Party's practices in the 1940s, he said, "Sometimes tricks and schemes were needed and unconventional methods were used to purchase land." It was "intolerable that a witch hunt should try to block this Zionist mission."

A third incident that comes to mind was a 1975 report by Yisrael Koenig, the Interior Ministry's district commissioner in the predominantly Israeli Arab-populated Galilee, warning that the improving education and high birth rate of Arabs with Israeli citizenship posed "a threat to our control of the area." The measures that Koenig, a Labor Party appointee, recommended to thwart this threat included urging young Arabs (who had no Arabic-language university in Israel) to study abroad and then making it difficult for them to return, "thereby encouraging their emigration." Again, I saw no evidence of public outrage or even dismay, although Yigal Allon, who was then the Foreign Minister in Yitzhak Rabin's Cabinet, expressed great "regret" that the Koenig report was "ever written," and "even greater that it was published."

This is not to suggest that there were not or are not many Israelis who, like Benny Morris, strongly disapprove of the way the Palestinians were treated. But they hardly needed Morris to tell them what had gone on. The "unconventional methods" defended by Shamir were no secret in Israel.

Milan J. Kubic
Bethesda, Md.

Benjamin Schwarz replies:

That Israelis were angered and exercised by Morris's evidence and arguments is a matter of copious public record—see the coverage of Morris's book in the Israeli press. That some Israelis acknowledged wrongdoing before Morris's book was published in no way negates this fact. Mr. Kubic's cavil seems to be an excuse to rehearse occasions of Israeli injustice, of which there are many. I hope and assume that Mr. Kubic would as readily recount the equal—perhaps greater—number of Palestinian and Arab atrocities and injustices perpetrated against Israelis.

Gore and the Internet

Joshua Green ("Playing Dirty," June *Atlantic*) focuses on politicians' use of factual material or innuendo, but begins his story by repeating something that very simply and unarguably is false: he refers to what he calls "[A] Gore's many exaggerations," including one "that he had somehow invented the Internet." Gore never said or implied that.

Stan Kurzban
Chappaqua, N.Y.

Joshua Green replies:

Nonsense. Gore's saying that he "took the initiative in creating the Internet" is akin to my suggesting that because I paid my taxes I took the initiative in balancing the federal budget—a considerable exaggeration.

Quixote Caged

In your April issue Terry Castle, responding to a letter writer's comment, wrote that she had committed a "Sancho-like gaffe" in her review of Edith Grossman's new English translation of *Don Quixote* ("High Plains Drifter," January/February *Atlantic*).

I wonder if there is another "Sancho-like gaffe" in her reply to the letter writer. Castle refers to certain narrative moments in the book, such as "the heart-breaking sequence in which Quixote is returned to his village in a cage at the end of Part 1."

I have read the book many times, in both English and Spanish, and can find no such scene. At the end of Part 1 Quixote, beaten and with a fractured shoulder, is carried back to his village in an oxcart lying on a bed of hay. Nowhere is there mention of his being in a cage. In his delusional state he refers to the cart as an enchanted chariot (*carro encantado*), is willingly helped into it, and lies down. In the Spanish: "*El boyero unció sus bueyes y acomodó a don Quijote sobre un haz de heno...*" ("The oxcart driver yoked his oxen and settled Don Quixote on a bundle of hay").

I agree that there is indeed heart-break in this scene. But it is the heart-break of fantasy colliding with reality, Cervantes at his sardonic, ironic best. That is why so many years ago my college

professor of Spanish literature described the book as "*El Quijote—la primera novela, y la mejor*" ("Quixote—the first novel, and the best").

Milton Weiss
Sebastian, Fla.

Terry Castle replies:

To get him safely home, Quixote's friends arrange for him to be put into "something like a cage with criss-crossed bars," which is placed on an ox driver's cart (Part 1, Chapter 46). Quixote is released for a pee in Chapter 49, but after a crazed fight with a goatherd (Chapter 52) he is put back in the cage on the cart, "just as he had been before," and arrives home in this ignominious fashion. Gustave Doré depicts cage and cart in one of his famous Cervantes engravings (1863).

Foaling Season

Aryn Kyle's story "Foaling Season" (May *Atlantic*) included this: "Along the driveway the geldings were stomping at the ground and ramming the gates of their pens with their chests. Their heads were wildly high, and the whites of their eyes caught the moonlight."

Although all horses' eyes have sclera (the area of the eye around the iris), only the appaloosa's sclera is white.

Mercille Wells
Thousand Oaks, Calif.

I enjoyed "Foaling Season," by Aryn Kyle. But allow me one cavil from my days as a copy editor: When the father says to Alice, "You've been a trooper, kid," that should read "trouper." Actors are the ones who strive so that the show goes on, not the state police.

David Galef
Oxford, Miss.

Advice & Consent

Ryan Lizza, in his excellent piece "Kerry's Consigliere" (May *Atlantic*), is right in referring to Bob Shrum as "the most sought-after consultant in Democratic politics" and (quoting a "Clinton veteran") "the dean of Democratic speechwriters." The ancient Roman Quintilian defined an orator as "a good man speaking well." Bob Shrum is a good man consulting and writing well. For me he is

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One complaint: Lizza describes my 1972 acceptance speech, "Come Home, America," which Bob helped to craft, as "an excellent isolationist appeal." That certainly was not our intent. I was calling the nation to revisit the ideals that gave us birth at home and abroad.

I have always been an internationalist. That is why I volunteered for service in World War II; supported the United Nations and the Marshall Plan; advocated the recognition of Israel, China, Cuba, and Palestine; and supported a liberal trade policy. Internationalism also led to my opposition to the American war in Vietnam. We were never more isolated from the international community than when we were deepest in the Vietnam jungle.

The same can be said of our current embroilment in Iraq against the wishes of the UN and nearly all the people of the world. Add to this the Administration's rejection of the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, its spurning of the international crimes court and the ban on land mines, and its walkout from the 1972 ABM Treaty to replace it by putting nuclear arms in outer space. All this adds up to isolationism with a vengeance. I prefer Jefferson's dictum: "A decent respect to the opinions of mankind."

*George McGovern
Mitchell, S. Dak.*

As an attorney with an interest in the regulatory aspects of organic food production, I was struck by an apparent omission in Corby Kummer's "Going With the Grain" (May *Atlantic*). In considering solutions to the problem faced by producers of "really wild wild rice," why was no mention made of organic certification under the USDA's National Organic Program? Section 205.207 of the NOP's regulatory text provides a special "wild-crop harvesting practice standard." Certification under this standard would enable producers of "true wild rice" to label their undeniably superior product as "wild-crop organic." This would solve at least two problems: first, it would alert consumers to the difference between "really wild wild rice" and paddy-grown wild rice; second, many of these consumers would be willing to pay a premium for the "or-

ganic" label, compensating producers for the added expense of harvesting natural stands of wild rice. The organic-certification approach would seem preferable to the one suggested in Kummer's article: amending state labeling laws in California and elsewhere.

*Blake F. Wilson
Toronto, Ont.*

I read P. J. O'Rourke's article on Iwo Jima ("Sulfur Island," June *Atlantic*) with a great deal of interest, because if Iwo had not been in American hands after March of 1945, I would most likely not be writing you.

A flight from the B-29 bases on Guam, Saipan, and Tinian to the Japanese homeland was a very long round trip; depending on the target, it could exceed 3,000 miles. The B-29 was a fine plane, but its engines were quirky and unpredictable. If you had trouble going to or from Japan, the only alternate landing place was the Pacific Ocean.

If the huge, war-ending B-29 raids were to be successful, the capture of Iwo was essential. O'Rourke wrote that the main thrust of the Iwo campaign was to provide an operational area for P-51s to escort the B-29s. This was not the case. The vast majority of B-29 raids were conducted at night. No formation flying was involved. The B-29s flew to the targets individually in order to preserve fuel. Iwo was captured in order to provide an alternate emergency landing area for B-29s with combat damage, mechanical troubles, or a shortage of fuel.

The American Heritage *History of World War II* states on page 588: "The price of Iwo came high, but at war's end 24,761 B-29 crewmen had used its airfield for emergency landings." I made three of those landings—twice with disabled engines and once for much-needed fuel.

*James T. Murphy
Alexandria, Va.*

I must respond to Gail T. Lambert's letter ("Letters to the Editor," June *Atlantic*) regarding Jonathan Rauch's essay on gay marriage ("A More Perfect Union," April *Atlantic*) and her reference to comments by Stanley Kurtz linking respect for gay marriage to the dissolution

of heterosexual unions in Scandinavia.

The state of Oklahoma has a divorce rate greater than 50 percent. Not surprisingly, the number of children being raised in single-parent homes has skyrocketed. The situation is so bleak that the federal government is spending my tax dollars to educate the citizens of Oklahoma about what it takes to stay committed to their marriages.

The state of Oklahoma is also a conservative place where gay Americans live—uneasily—by keeping a low profile. So tell me, Ms. Lambert and Mr. Kurtz, who is responsible for the state of matrimony in the state of Oklahoma?

*Susan Messenheimer
Truro, Mass.*

Douglas McGray, in his article on Philip Mangano and homelessness ("The Abolitionist," June *Atlantic*) writes, "In the late 1970s . . . state hospitals, prodded by patient's-rights activists, released hundreds of thousands of the mentally ill into communities unprepared to receive them."

What happened in the state of Maine (and, I assume, other states) was that the legislature passed laws closing the hospitals and mandating the establishment of outpatient clinics and group homes for the mentally ill. The state kept the great savings from the closures, but never adequately funded the clinics and support services, relying instead on federal programs to take care of the ex-patients. The activists who documented the problems are not to blame for the result.

*Del Cain
Orlando, Fla.*

"John Ashcroft's Permanent Campaign," by Jeffrey Rosen (April *Atlantic*), demonstrates clearly the ability of many religiously conservative people to comfortably hold contradictory beliefs. Early in the article Ashcroft is described as excoriating gambling and homosexuality as sins. Later he is quoted as saying, "I don't believe we're here by accident. I'm a religious person. I believe we are created by God, and I don't believe that God created any inferior people"—unless they are gay or lesbian, that is.

*Donald L. Weston
Tubac, Ariz.*

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THE AGENDA

THIS MONTH, a report card on Iraq;
books on Bush; how to fight a "netwar"

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LESSONS OF ABU GHRAIB

*The photographs were shocking—but the disturbing reality
is that for some people they clearly weren't*

BY MARK BOWDEN

.....

A committee of devils scheming to thwart American intentions in Iraq could have done no worse than turning a group of loutish, leering U.S. soldiers loose with a camera on bound, hooded, naked Iraqi prisoners.

The U.S. intervention in Iraq is troubled, to say the least, and now our own forces have handed our enemies a propaganda coup that trumps their best efforts. The photos from Abu Ghraib prison portray Americans as exactly the sexually obsessed, crude, arrogant, godless occupiers that our enemies say we are. They have even succeeded in uniting those on both sides of the war issue at home. Everyone is outraged and disgraced. The two sides are competing for adjectives to properly express the depths of their revulsion.

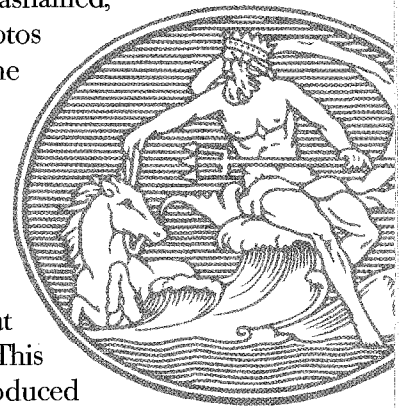
And rightly so. There is no excuse for the abuses at Abu Ghraib.

The individual soldiers involved ought to feel ashamed, as should our military and our nation. The photos we have seen so far come in two categories: one

suggests a complete lack of order; the other, even more disturbing, a systematic, inappropriate use of coercive interrogation methods. In certain rare cases keeping a prisoner cold, uncomfortable, frightened, and disoriented is morally justified and necessary; but the danger in acknowledging as much has always been that such abusive treatment will become the norm. This is what happened in Israel, where a newly introduced regime of officially sanctioned "aggressive interrogation"

quickly deteriorated into a system of routine physical abuse. (The Israeli Supreme Court reissued a ban on all such practices in 1999.) Routine physical abuse appears to have resulted already at Abu Ghraib, where such torments were apparently employed wholesale, and where a climate of dehumanization and sadism took root. The responsibility for that extends way up the chain of command, in ways that will become clear only with time and investigation. There are predictions (including one by Karl Rove, no less) that it will take a generation to repair the damage to America's image in the Middle East.

In the face of this horror even the most measured attempts to add context or perspective seem almost beside the point. Have there been exaggerations? The photos are said to prove that American forces are



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no better than Saddam Hussein's jailers. Well, no: whatever the Americans did, it is not the equivalent of cutting out tongues, gouging out eyes, lopping off limbs, stringing people up with piano wire, and executing people by the tens of thousands. One former Iraqi prisoner was quoted by the Associated Press as saying that he would rather have been tortured by Saddam—an opinion that, like a boast of bravery, is easier to hold to when there is no danger of its being put to the test.

And, needless to say, there's plenty of hypocrisy. Maybe it's just me, but did I miss a similar storm of moral outrage from the Arab world over the pious Islamists who got out their video cameras to record the gruesome beheadings of Daniel Pearl

and guided by policy that is morally sound. Sadly, this is not always the case.

The scenes depicted in the photographs are a graphic example of what often takes place in a prison environment where controls and supervision are inadequate. Prison guards have been abusing inmates for as long as there have been prisons. In a now infamous 1971 psychological experiment at Stanford University, in which one randomly selected group of students was permitted to play the role of "guards" over another group of "inmates," abuses began almost immediately, and at one point involved forcing inmates into sexually humiliating role-playing. People don't like to admit it, but the propensity for cruelty is in all of us, and it rises to the surface for many when they

this magazine about the moral imperative for using these methods on uncooperative individuals withholding critical, life-saving information. No doubt there are some imprisoned in Iraq who fall into that category. But such instances are rare.

The only way to prevent interrogators from feeling licensed to abuse is to make them individually responsible for their actions. If I lean on an insurgent leader who knows where surface-to-air missiles are stockpiled, then I can offer the defense of necessity if charges are brought against me. I might be able to persuade the court or tribunal that my ugly choice was justified. But when a prison, an army, or a government tacitly approves coercive measures as a matter of course, widespread and indefensible human-rights abuses become inevitable. Such approval unleashes the sadists. It leads to severe physical torture (because there can never be a clear line between coercion and torture), to rape, and to murder.

These things may already have happened. The Bush Administration has tried to walk a dangerous line in these matters. The President has spoken out against torture, but his equivocations on the terms of the Geneva Convention suggest that he perceives wiggle room between ideal and practice. There are reports that Administration lawyers quietly drafted a series of secret legal opinions last year that codified the "aggressive" methods of interrogation permitted at U.S. detention facilities—which, if true, effectively authorized in advance the use of coercion.

Perhaps the most disturbing evidence of this mindset was Donald Rumsfeld's long initial silence on the Abu Ghraib photos. His failure to alert the President or congressional leaders before the photos became public—and he *knew* they were going to become public—leads one to conclude that he didn't think they were a very big deal. If so, this reveals him to be astonishingly tone-deaf, or worse. Maybe he simply wasn't shocked. ▀

Mark Bowden is an Atlantic national correspondent. His cover story "The Dark Art of Interrogation" appeared in the October 2003 Atlantic.

In the face of this horror, what is universal about the events at Abu Ghraib makes even measured attempts to add context seem almost beside the point.

and Nicholas Berg? Okay, those were renegade co-religionists, and maybe it's not a fair comparison. So let's look at official government policy. Any reader of the yearly reports on torture published by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch would pay his weight in antique dinars to stay in an American military prison if the alternative was jail anywhere in the Arab world. Hayder Sabbar Abd, one of the men being abused in the Abu Ghraib photos, said he fully expected to be killed. Of course he did. That's what happens to men thrown in jail in his part of the world.

In the end, though, context and perspective cannot mask what is universal about the events at Abu Ghraib. I respect soldiers as much as anyone, but every group of young men (and, apparently, women) contains a few who get a thrill out of kicking somebody when he is helpless and down. Americans are not a superior race, and American soldiers are not morally superior to the soldiers of other nations. The best we can hope is that they are better trained and disciplined,

are given complete authority over other human beings. Add the unique environment of war, in which culture, religion, race, ethnicity, and ideology often separate guards from prisoners, and abuses are sadly and extremely likely.

The fact that the pictures were taken at all, and the cheerful expressions on the faces of the American bullies, suggest an atmosphere in which these soldiers had no reason to fear being punished for their behavior. It seems doubtful that the photos were meant to be used later to intimidate other prisoners, as has been suggested. If that had been so, the guards would probably have tried to look threatening. These photos have the appearance of grotesque souvenirs. The smiling faces of the tormentors suggest that apart from lacking moral judgment, these soldiers felt licensed to abuse.

Why? By all accounts, military and CIA interrogators at the prison were using coercive tactics—sleep deprivation, deception, fear, or drugs—on large numbers of prisoners, and even recruiting prison guards to assist them. I have written in

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PLAN OF ATTACK

*Insurgents in Iraq are forging improbable alliances to fight what some analysts call a "netwar."
The United States needs to adapt—and to relearn some old lessons*

"We know we're killing a lot, capturing a lot, collecting arms," Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld reportedly told a meeting of defense analysts and retired officers at the Pentagon last year, commenting on U.S. attempts to thwart the growing insurgency in Iraq. "We just don't know yet whether that's the same as winning." Rumsfeld's remark encapsulates the confusion and frustration that have plagued U.S. counterinsurgency efforts around the world for more than half a century—most notably in Vietnam, El Salvador, and now Iraq. The United States is not alone, however. It is the latest victim of a problem that has long afflicted the world's governments and militaries when they are confronted with insurgencies: namely, a striking inability to absorb and apply the lessons learned in previous counterinsurgency campaigns.

Guerrilla groups and terrorist organizations, on the other hand, learn lessons very well. They study their own mistakes *and* the successful operations of their enemies, and they adapt nimbly. The past year in Iraq has been a case in point: insurgents have moved from sporadic, relatively unsophisticated roadside bomb attacks to more coordinated, even synchronized attacks, with brutally successful results: growing numbers of coalition soldiers and Iraqi civilians are dying; security in much of the country remains fragile or elusive; Iraqi resentment of the United States is increasing; and international political support for the American occupation, never exactly formidable to begin with, is withering. By many measures the insurgents are succeeding and we are failing.

Regardless of the ultimate outcome in Iraq, in the decades ahead the United States is likely to be drawn into other military occupations and nation-building efforts; America's superpower status and the ongoing war on terrorism make this prospect almost inevitable. To a very important degree our ability to carry out such jobs effectively will depend on an

approach to counterinsurgency that makes intelligent use of the lessons that countries around the world have confronted repeatedly throughout history. At root those lessons are basic: First, always remember that the struggle is not primarily military but political, social, economic, and ideological. Second, learn to recognize the signs of a budding insurgency, and never let it develop momentum. Third, study and understand the enemy in advance. And fourth, put a strong emphasis on gathering up-to-the-minute local intelligence.

SECURITY
**BRUCE
HOFFMAN**

Political considerations—applied to doctrine, planning, implementation, and, especially, operational coordination—must be at the foundation of any approach to counterinsurgency. The vigorousness of the insurgency in Iraq today stems directly from the fact that the United States did not plan well enough for the occupation; we lost a critical window of opportunity because we failed to anticipate the widespread civil disorder and looting that followed the capture of Baghdad. Despite the detailed planning for occupying postwar Iraq that was under way in many parts of the U.S. government (see "Blind Into Baghdad," by James Fallows, January/February 2004 *Atlantic*), the officials directly charged with running the war and handling its aftermath appear not to have seriously considered the possibility that a sustained resistance effort might emerge and snowball into an insurgency. We were simply not on the lookout for the early signs of a social climate favorable to resistance; as a result, we were not able to suppress the insurgency before it had a chance to grow and gain momentum.

In the early 1990s I was the co-author of two RAND Corporation reports that together analyzed seven historical counterinsurgency and counterterrorist campaigns, involving Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, Germany, Italy, and Rhodesia. In every case we

noted that because authorities failed to detect the signs of incipient insurgency, and because the government was not sufficiently integrated with the military to mount a decisive initial response, the insurgents or terrorists had time to entrench themselves in the civilian population and to solidify their efforts. All was not necessarily lost, but time, money, and many lives were needlessly expended. In Iraq, as in the countries we studied, by the time the authorities realized the seriousness of the situation, they had squandered invaluable opportunities to bring the insurgency to heel.

The military side of the equation cannot be neglected, of course. But in any military operation it is essential to acquire, coordinate, analyze, and disseminate "actionable intelligence." Here, too, the United States has fallen far short of the mark in Iraq. *The Washington Post* has reported that the CIA station in Baghdad may well be the largest in the world by now, with more than 300 full-time case officers and nearly 500 employees (including contractors) in total—a figure that, according to the *Post*, is up from an originally planned complement of only eighty-five officers. Yet intelligence collection remains a problem, especially in our efforts to determine how many insurgents are present and who they are—two of the most basic and necessary pieces of information for understanding and fighting any insurgency. The generally accepted number, cited by General John Abizaid last November, was 5,000; most are thought to be Sunni Muslims who belonged to the Baath Party or served in the military, the police, or the security and intelligence services. Tellingly, U.S. officials still estimate the number to be between four and six thousand, despite obvious signs that the insurgency has grown. U.S. and other sources believe that more than 90 percent of the violent acts carried out by the insurgents are the work of these FREs (former regime elements), who are reported to be either doing the job themselves or paying others (often

criminals or unemployed “angry young men”) to do it. Despite repeated claims from official Washington that a large number of foreign volunteers are converging on Iraq, American military commanders report no indications that this is the case; the most frequently cited figure is around 500, although some estimates put it at 1,000 to 3,000. Of the 5,000 insurgents already in custody (a



number strongly suggesting that official U.S. estimates are too low), only about 300 are foreigners. No doubt the search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq explains some of the inadequacies in this area. Indeed, it was not until late November—when the daily pace of guerrilla attacks on U.S. troops rose to some forty a day—that many intelligence officers and analysts were reassigned from that search to focus on the insurgency.

Although determining the size of the insurgency is critical to combating it, recent history has shown that to a certain degree the exact numbers are immaterial. For more than twenty years a hard core of just twenty or thirty members of the Baader-Meinhof gang terrorized West Germany—a stable country with much more sophisticated and reliable

police, security, and intelligence services than Iraq is likely to have for some time. Similarly, some fifty to seventy-five Red Brigadists imposed a reign of terror on Italy; the worst period, in the late 1970s, is still referred to as the “years of lead.” And for thirty years a dedicated cadre of 200 to 400 IRA gunmen and bombers frustrated the effort to maintain law and order in Northern Ireland.

These examples are clearly not parallel to the situation in Iraq, but they do illustrate an important principle: there will always be a fundamental asymmetry in the dynamic between insurgency and counterinsurgency. Guerrillas and terrorists do not have to defeat their opponents militarily; they just have to avoid losing. In this respect the more conspicuous the security forces are and the more pervasive their operations become, the stronger the insurgency appears to be. Insurgents try to disrupt daily life and commerce with their attacks; they hope that security-force countermeasures will alienate the population and create a public impression of the authorities as oppressors rather than protectors. This, in a nutshell, is what is happening in Iraq.

General Abizaid has described the current conflict in Iraq as a “classical guerrilla-type campaign.” In important ways, however, it is not. The Iraqi insurgency, unlike most others, has no center of gravity. Secular Baathists and other FREs are cooperating with domestic and foreign religious extremists. As a senior official with the Coalition Provisional Authority wrote to me in February, two months before this phenomenon crystallized in the fight for Fallujah, “Here the Baathist-Islamic divide does not exist in a practical sense. I wouldn’t have thought it possible, as they were so diametrically opposed to each other during the [Saddam Hus-

sein] regime—but it is happening.” The Iraqi insurgency today appears to have no clear leader (or leadership), no ambition to seize and actually hold territory (except ephemerally, as in the recent cases of Fallujah and Najaf), no unifying ideology, and, most important, no identifiable organization. Rather, what we find in Iraq is the closest manifestation yet of “netwar,” a concept defined in 1992 by the RAND analysts John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt as unconventional warfare involving flat, segmented networks instead of the pyramidal hierarchies and command-and-control systems (no matter how primitive) that have governed traditional insurgent organizations. The insurgency in Iraq is taking place in an ambiguous and constantly shifting environment, with constellations of cells and individuals gravitating toward one another—to carry out armed attacks, exchange intelligence, trade weapons, and engage in joint training—and then dispersing, sometimes never to operate together again. It is a battlefield situation that a conventional military often cannot cope with, and we must learn to adapt. We must build effective indigenous intelligence capabilities so that we can identify the signs of an incipient insurgency; establish, train, and forge close cooperative relations with a functioning and capable police force; improve the safety, security, and living conditions of the local population, thereby gaining their confidence; and take advantage of the training capabilities, language skills, and cultural awareness and sensitivities of American special-operations forces, whose mission specifically includes the training of foreign militaries. In the end, however, no matter how sophisticated a response we develop, and no matter how new the insurgents’ strategies are, a simple lesson that has been learned and forgotten again and again still applies: Don’t let insurgencies get started in the first place. ▀

Bruce Hoffman is the acting director of the RAND Corporation’s Center for Middle East Public Policy and a senior fellow at the U.S. Military Academy’s Combating Terrorism Center.

THE PRAGMATIST

Lakhdar Brahimi understands that perhaps neither peace nor justice is possible in Iraq—which may make him just the man the country needs

Lakhdar Brahimi—a veteran of UN missions to Haiti, the Congo, Yemen, Liberia, Nigeria, Sudan, and, most recently, Afghanistan—has now been charged with the job of mending Iraq. The difficulty of Brahimi's task can hardly be overstated: although the United States is committed to transferring some sort of sovereignty to Iraqi hands on June 30, elections will not be possible before January of 2005—and the situation in Iraq is a mess.

Moreover, whatever interim administration Brahimi appoints will be hastily assembled and effectively subservient to the U.S. military; it will have little chance of being accepted as truly legitimate or representative. Nor will it be fully empowered to run Iraq's affairs.

Brahimi—whose official title is special adviser to the Secretary-General on the political situation in Iraq—is an odd match for the Bush Administration's Wilsonian project in Iraq. He does not see it as his business to engineer new democracies, or to impose outside visions on reluctant societies. On the contrary, he is a tough-minded realist who respects and understands power; his approach in similarly vexed situations has been to figure out which players are in charge on the ground and how to meet their minimum requirements. In Afghanistan, for instance, where he successfully negotiated a peace among competing armed factions after the U.S. invasion in 2001, Brahimi earned the enmity of human-rights advocates by allowing murderous warlords not merely to escape justice but to become officials of the new government. Assuring peace and stability, Brahimi explained, was a higher priority than realizing justice—and the surest way to restore peace quickly was to make the warlords stakeholders in the new government.

At the Afghan negotiations he chaired in Bonn, beginning in November of 2001, Brahimi worked out the following arrangement: an interim

government would convene an emergency *loya jirga* seven months later, in order to select the government that would lead Afghanistan for two years after that. The *loya jirga*, organized by a commission of Afghans under UN supervision, has proved to be one of the most controversial undertakings of the seventy-year-old Brahimi's long career. Nader Nadery, an Afghan who worked as a human-rights activist during the Taliban era, served on the commission.

He recalls that the Afghans drew up stringent guidelines excluding anyone who was known to be a human-rights violator from the *loya jirga*. "But Mr. Brahimi and the interim government were insisting that we invite the warlords," Nadery recalls. "He was pushing the commission to violate its own rules and procedures."

Whether the warlords were brought in on Brahimi's initiative or the Pentagon's is disputed. But Brahimi defended the idea in conversations at the time and in interviews afterward. He explained to the Afghans that if the warlords were not invited, they wouldn't accept the decisions of the *loya jirga*. He pointed out that the warlords, who had been armed and supported by the United States in the war against the Taliban, already controlled much of Afghanistan's territory; they could not be wished away. Four months later, in an interview conducted by the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School, Brahimi said that although civil leaders claimed to be more representative of the Afghan people than the warlords were, they had no particular basis for asserting this. "Yeah, they are nice people; they want the good of their country; but to say that they are representative—how?" he asked. "You can't compare whether the others are more representative or not."

In the event, the warlords not only attended the *loya jirga* but occupied front-row seats and left the proceedings in possession of important government

ministries. It was a turning point for the new Afghanistan and, Brahimi's critics say, a tantalizing opportunity wasted. Although few experts believe the warlords could have been excluded from the political process, most of those with whom I spoke thought that Brahimi, the United States, and the United Nations actually *strengthened* the warlords at a moment when they could have been weakened. Vikram Parekh, a Kabul-based researcher for the nonprofit International Crisis Group, faults Brahimi for taking too little input from his own more experienced staff members, who might have told him that some of the warlords were "paper tigers," far from invincible. Nader Nadery recalls attending the pre-*loya jirga* election in Mazar-e-Sharif, where a handful of regional delegates were to be elected by secret ballot from among caucuses of about sixty local notables. One of the warlords, the notoriously brutal and much feared General Abdul Rashid Dostum, stood as a candidate. For the first time his lock on power was not assured. "When they were counting votes, I saw that his hands were shaking," Nadery told me. "He was very disturbed. He was concerned if he failed, if he lost, what will happen." He didn't lose—a fact Nadery attributes to the conspicuous presence of Dostum's thugs; but even more disappointing to his opponents was the legitimacy conferred on people like Dostum by an international community that saw them not as fading figures from Afghanistan's ugly past but as crucial interlocutors in determining its future. "General Dostum left the *loya jirga* tent a different person," Nadery claims. "A few days ago his hands were shaking. Now he left the tent the same person he was in 1992. He'd been honored by the international community and the government."

The trouble with Brahimi's approach was that stability and justice were never actually separable. Unsurprisingly, the warlords run their ministries as patronage rackets. Their political and economic

BRIEF LIVES

**LAURA
SECOR**



entrenchment in power, along with their failure to disarm, has made it very hard for the central government to impose the rule of law more broadly on the country. Though overshadowed by the dramatic news of insurgency and prisoner abuse in Iraq, the situation in Afghanistan has been steadily deteriorating.

Indeed, toward the end of his tenure as head of the UN mission in Afghanistan, Brahimi seems to have realized that he could not guarantee long-term security there if key ministers in the Afghan government were criminals beyond the reach of the law. "As time wore on in his last year," one diplomatic source told me, "he realized that the continued role of the warlords would bring disaster to Afghanistan. He began to care much more about human rights. It was an evolution in his thinking. He began to realize that unless one had some kind of constitution and disarmament and rule of law, the process would not end up well." Shortly before he left Afghanistan, in January of this year, Brahimi delivered a rousing speech to this effect at the constitutional *loya jirga*.

Beyond the immediate lessons of Afghanistan, Brahimi brings a distinct set of values and experiences to

the situation in Iraq. To begin with, he has a long-standing distrust of anything that suggests colonial domination, whether by outright U.S. occupation or by heavy-handed UN administration. This makes sense given that his formative political experience was the Algerian independence movement. Born in 1934, to a wealthy rural family living south of Algiers, Brahimi was a student in Paris in the 1950s. There he co-founded the Algerian student union that would furnish the nucleus of Algeria's political elite for decades after independence was won, in 1962.

Brahimi served as Algeria's ambassador first to Egypt and then to Britain in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1989, as undersecretary of the Arab League, he negotiated the Taif agreement that ended Lebanon's sectarian civil war. It was an accomplishment that would mark him as one of the Arab world's hardest-driving and most effective diplomats, and as a realist who was willing to negotiate with the bad guys. Years later he recalled that members of Lebanon's civil society complained that he was dealing with thugs. He replied, "I haven't come to Lebanon to meet nice people. I've come to meet these thugs. The nice people are sitting in Paris."

After Taif, Brahimi's reputation abroad soared—but his reputation at home in Algeria, where he served as Foreign Minister from 1991 to 1993, soon became clouded. With Algeria's Islamist party poised to win parliamentary elections in 1992, the National Liberation Front imposed martial law and created a six-member security council to run the country. Brahimi was a member of that council and defended its legitimacy, saying that the Islamist party should never have been legalized.

When Brahimi resigned as Foreign Minister, the UN hired him. His work over the following decade in trying to settle some of the most intractable conflicts in the world secured him his reputation as a shrewd and tireless negotiator. At a time when the United Nations suffered widespread scorn for its ineffectuality in Bosnia and Rwanda, Brahimi was globally respected for his independence and straight talk. In 2000 he was appointed to head a panel that would evaluate the past and future of UN peacekeeping. The Brahimi report, as the panel's document came to be known, suggested a sweeping overhaul of UN peacekeeping operations. It called for a centralized office of information and analysis, a rapidly deployable peacekeeping force, and a re-examination of the UN's neutral stance. "Impartiality," the report's authors maintained, should not be permitted to "amount to complicity with evil."

"The Brahimi report was a high-water mark for post-Cold War peacekeeping," one former UN official told me. "It reflected a high level of ambition and optimism about the role the UN could play in the future." But, perhaps unsurprisingly, the report's most ambitious recommendations have languished for lack of resources or political will.

How will his experience in Afghanistan and elsewhere bear on what confronts Brahimi in Iraq? The lesson human-rights advocates draw from the Afghan experience is, as Sam Zia-Zarifi,



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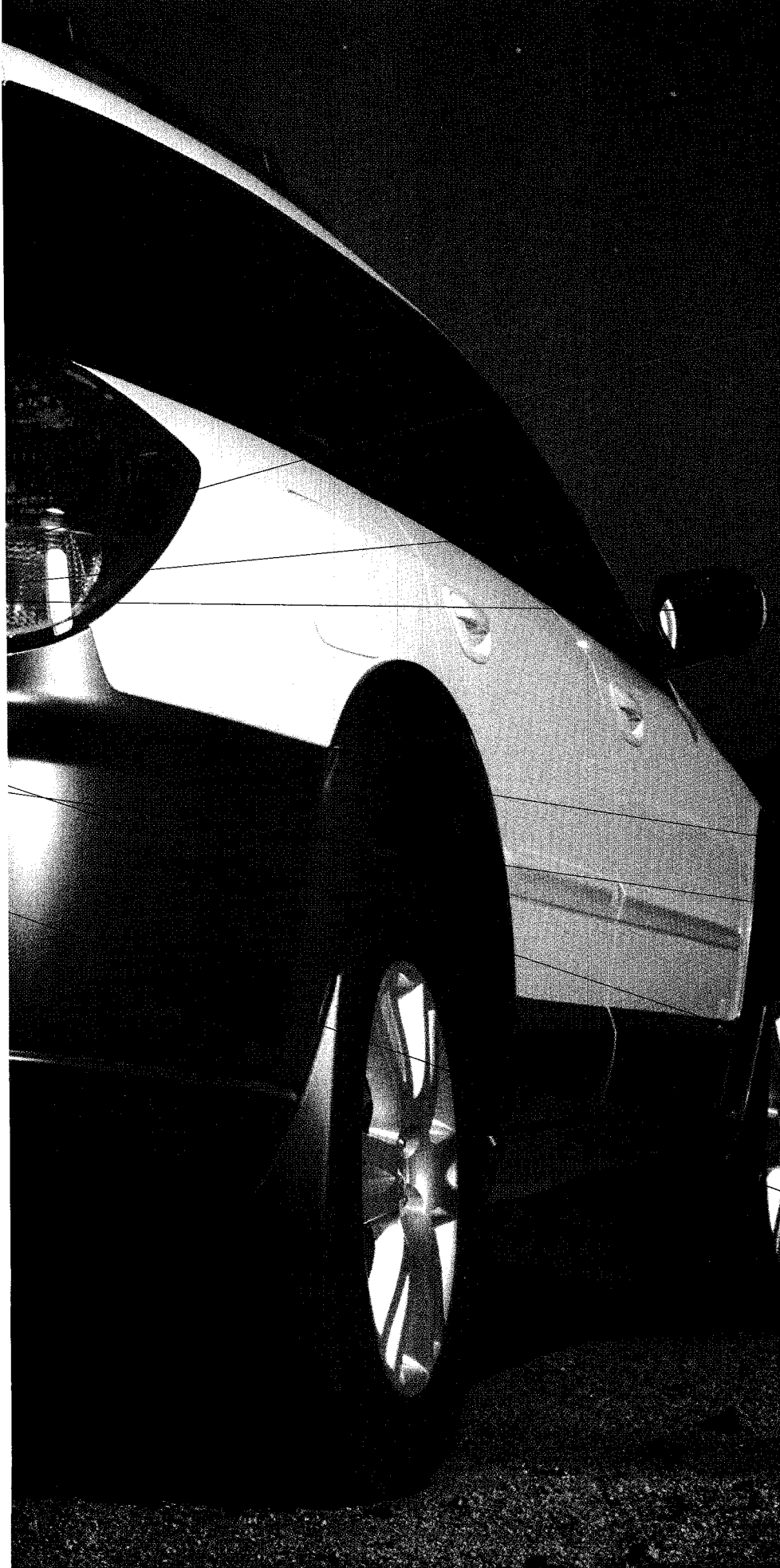
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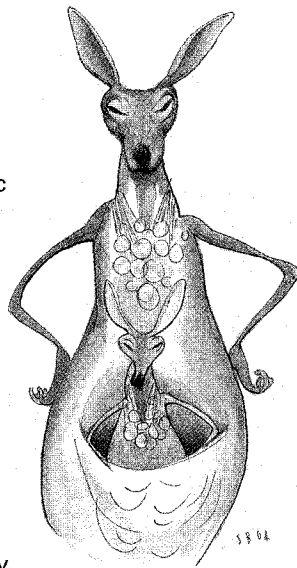
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OLYMPIC ELITE

The world's most athletic nations

As athletes vie for Olympic glory in Athens, patriotic couch potatoes everywhere will be cheering on their countrymen. But which is the world's most athletic nation? A handful of large countries have traditionally dominated the medal count: in the 1996 and 2000 summer games the United States (198 medals) and Russia (150) were the biggest winners, followed by Germany (122), China (109), and Australia (99). But medal counts don't truly measure athleticism; simple math says that a highly populous country like the United States is more likely than a tiny country—say, Liechtenstein—to produce a champion sprinter. If all nations were equally athletic, each would win a share of medals proportional to its share of world population. One way to measure a country's athleticism, then, is to rank it by how much it exceeds (or falls short of) its "expected share" of medals.

By this standard the United States has still performed well, winning two and a half times as many medals as the size of its population would lead one to expect. But dozens of other nations have done better. Here are the ten countries (with at least five medals) that have most impressively exceeded their expected share of medals over the past two Summer Olympics. —NATHAN LITTLEFIELD



- 1. Australia** 18.2 times its expected share: 99 medals. Rough stereotypes notwithstanding, Australians have frequently won medals in what might be thought of as preppy sports: rowing, equestrian events, and field hockey. They've also dominated many swimming events.
- 2. Jamaica** 17.05 times: 13 medals. Jamaicans were among the world's fastest sprinters in 1996 and 2000. Twelve of their thirteen medals were won in sprints.
- 3. Cuba** 16.98 times: 54 medals. Cuba's success may support the old theory of a "Communist premium": the determination of Communist countries to industrialize the production of Olympic medal winners. Or it may simply be that Cubans are great boxers and baseball players.
- 4. Norway** 13.2 times: 17 medals. Norway's profile may be highest in women's soccer, but almost half its summer medals have been won in sailing, rowing, and kayaking.
- 5. Hungary** 13.1 times: 38 medals. Hungarians are among the world's best canoers and kayakers.
- 6. Bulgaria** 12.2 times: 28 medals. If you meet a Bulgarian in a dark alley at 3:00 A.M., it's probably best not to start a fight. Men's weightlifting and wrestling have produced several medals; so have pistol events for both sexes.
- 7. Belarus** 10.7 times: 32 medals. While keeping one eye out for Bulgarians, keep the other out for Belarusians. They excel in shooting, throwing, and wrestling.
- 8. The Netherlands** 9.7 times: 44 medals. Athletic success and permissive attitudes toward mind-altering substances *can* coexist. The Dutch have excelled in equestrian events, swimming, cycling, and rowing.
- 9. New Zealand** 9.6 times: 10 medals. The Kiwis won three of their ten medals in sailing events. The remainder came in equestrian events, rowing, and swimming.
- 10. Denmark** 7.9 times: 12 medals. The Danes have won medals in handball, badminton, rowing, and sailing.

(Bonus ranking: India is by far the least athletic of the large nations, winning less than one percent of its expected share, or just two medals—both bronze.)

Nathan Littlefield is an Atlantic staff researcher.

a senior researcher for Human Rights Watch, puts it: "If you rely on the bad guys—warlords, military leaders, the Baath Party—for short-term security to compensate for an earlier lack of resources and planning on the part of the United States, it's very hard to get those guys out." Brahimi seems to have taken that lesson somewhat to heart. At a briefing in front of the United Nations Security Council on April 27 he proposed a caretaker government composed of technocrats—professionals without political aspirations or constituencies. Under this plan Iraq's politicians and militia leaders—the parties who had the leverage on the ground and the power to subvert the peace—would play no part.

As of this writing, the United States is reportedly opposing this plan and pressing Brahimi to include members of the current governing council in the caretaker government. Whether or not Brahimi wins this battle, his initial plan reflects the understanding that his mandate in Iraq is slim. So the gamble he appears to have taken is this: the less the interim government pretends to be anything other than a short-term entity to get Iraq to elections and the end of the occupation, the less likely it is to entrench itself, to taint Iraq's future leaders by association with the occupying powers, or to enrage the public with its ineffectuality.

Brahimi probably has a better chance than anyone else of negotiating a peace, however imperfect, between the coalition and the armed Shia and Sunni militias, or a power-sharing arrangement among Iraq's political and ethnic blocs. But in devising an interim Iraqi government in which the powerful will play no role, Brahimi is taking into account not only the lessons of Afghanistan but also how little he has to work with in Iraq—and how little he has ultimately been asked to do. ▀

Laura Secor, a former staff writer for the Boston Globe "Ideas" section, is a freelance writer living in New York.



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I AGREE WITH ME

When was the last time a conservative talk show changed a mind?

Last year, on a long car trip, I was listening to Rush Limbaugh shout. I usually agree with Rush Limbaugh; therefore I usually don't listen to him. I listen to NPR: "World to end—poor and minorities hardest hit." I like to argue with the radio. Of course, if I had kept listening to Limbaugh, whose OxyContin addiction was about to be revealed, I could have argued with him about drugs. I don't think drugs are bad. I used to be a hippie. I think drugs are fun. Now I'm a conservative. I think fun is bad. I would agree all the more with Limbaugh if, after he returned from rehab, he'd shouted (as most Americans ought to), "I'm sorry I had fun! I promise not to have any more!"

Anyway, I couldn't get NPR on the car radio, so I was listening to Rush Limbaugh shout about Wesley Clark, who had just entered the Democratic presidential-primary race. Was Clark a stalking horse for Hillary Clinton?! Was Clark a DNC-sponsored Howard Dean spoiler?! "He's somebody's sock puppet!" Limbaugh bellowed. I agreed; but a thought began to form. Limbaugh wasn't shouting at Clark, who I doubt tunes in to AM talk radio the way I tune in to NPR. And "Shari Lewis and Lamb Chop!" was not a call calculated to lure Democratic voters to the Bush camp. Rush Limbaugh was shouting at me.

Me. I am a little to the right of ... Why is the Attila comparison used? Fifth-century Hunnish depredations on the Roman Empire were the work of an overpowerful executive pursuing a policy of economic redistribution in an atmosphere of permissive social mores. I am a little to the right of Rush Limbaugh. I'm so conservative that I approve of San Francisco City Hall marriages, adoption by same-sex couples, and New Hampshire's recently ordained Episcopal bishop. Gays want to get married, have children, and go to church. Next they'll be advocating school vouchers, boycotting HBO, and voting Republican.

AT LARGE
**P.J.
O'ROURKE**

I suppose I should be arguing with my fellow right-wingers about that, and drugs, and many other things. But I won't be. Arguing, in the sense of attempting to convince others, has gone out of fashion with conservatives. The formats of their radio and television programs allow for little measured debate, and to the extent that evidence is marshaled to support conservative ideas, the tone is less trial of Socrates than Johnnie Cochran summation to the O.J. jury. Except the jury—with a clever marketing strategy—has been rigged. I wonder, when was the last time a conservative talk show changed a mind?

This is an argument I have with my father-in-law, an avid fan of such programs. Although again, I don't actually argue, because I usually agree with my father-in-law. Also, he's a retired FBI agent, and at seventy-eight is still a licensed private investigator with a concealed-weapon permit. But I say to him, "What do you get out of these shows? You already agree with everything they say."

"They bring up some good points," he says.

"That you're going to use on whom? Do some of your retired-FBI-agent golf buddies feel shocked by the absence of WMDs in Iraq and want to give Saddam Hussein a mulligan and let him take his tee shot over?"

And he looks at me with an FBI-agent look, and I shut up. But the number and popularity of conservative talk shows have grown apace since the Reagan Administration. The effect, as best I can measure it, is nil. In 1988 George Bush won the presidency with 53.4 percent of the popular vote. In 2000 Bush's arguably more conservative son won the presidency with a Supreme Court ruling.

A generation ago there wasn't much conservatism on the airwaves. For the most part it was lonely Bill Buckley moderating *Firing Line*. But from 1964 to 1980 we went from Barry Goldwater's defeat with 38.5 percent of the popular vote to Ronald

Reagan's victory with 50.8 percent of the popular vote. Perhaps there was something efficacious in Buckley's—if he'll pardon the word—moderation.

I tried watching *The O'Reilly Factor*. I tried watching Hannity shout about Colmes. I tried listening to conservative talk radio. But my frustration at concurrence would build, mounting from exasperation with like-mindedness to a fury of accord, and I'd hit the OFF button.

I resorted to books. You can slam a book shut in irritation and then go back to the irritant without having to plumb the mysteries of TiVo.

My selection method was unscientific. Ann Coulter, on the cover of *Treason*, has the look of a soon-to-be-ex wife

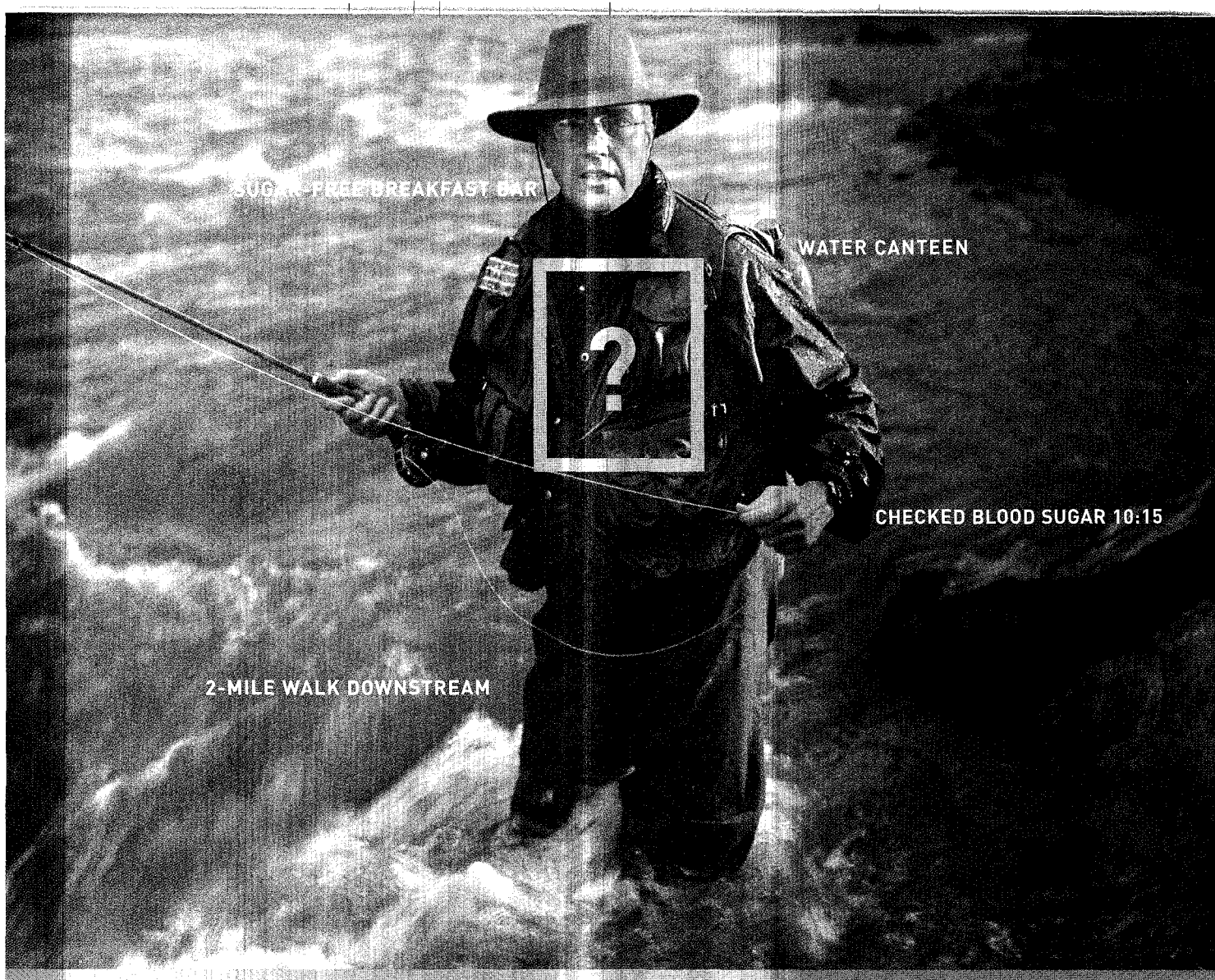


who has just finished shouting. And Bill O'Reilly is wearing a loud shirt on the cover of *Who's Looking Out for You?*

Coulter begins her book thus:

Liberals have a preternatural gift for striking a position on the side of treason. You could be talking about Scrabble and they would instantly leap to the anti-American position. Everyone says liberals love America, too. No they don't. Whenever the nation is under attack, from within or without, liberals side with the enemy.

Now, there's a certain truth in what she says. But it's what's called a "poetic truth." And it's the kind of poetic truth best conveyed late in the evening after six or eight drinks while pounding the bar. I wasn't in a bar. I was in my office.



YOU MANAGE YOUR BLOOD SUGAR. WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO HELP PROTECT YOUR HEART?

If you have diabetes, you probably think if you're managing your blood sugar, you're managing all your health risks. Unfortunately, managing your blood sugar may not be enough to help protect your heart. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) states that middle-aged people with type 2 diabetes have the same high risk of having a heart attack as people without diabetes who already have had a heart attack.

The Heart Protection Study by Oxford University, funded in part by Merck, researched ZOCOR. ZOCOR is the first and only cholesterol medication proven to significantly reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke in people with diabetes. Regardless of cholesterol level.

Before the Heart Protection Study was complete, ZOCOR was a time-tested, cholesterol-lowering medication, with over 160 million prescriptions filled in the past 11 years.

If you have diabetes, ask your doctor how ZOCOR, along with a healthy diet, can help protect you. Get information about the Heart Protection Study and ZOCOR at zocor.com or call 1-800-MERCK-75.

INFORMATION
ABOUT THE
HEART
PROTECTION
STUDY
AND ZOCOR
(SIMVASTATIN)

ZOCOR
(SIMVASTATIN)

Important considerations: ZOCOR is a prescription medicine and isn't right for everyone, including women who are nursing or pregnant or who may become pregnant, anyone with liver problems, and people who are allergic to any ingredients of ZOCOR. Unexplained muscle pain or weakness could be a sign of a rare but serious side effect and should be reported to your doctor right away. Your doctor may do blood tests before and during treatment with ZOCOR to check for liver problems. To avoid serious side effects, discuss with your doctor medicine or food you should avoid while on ZOCOR.

YOUR RESULTS MAY VARY.

PLEASE READ THE MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT ZOCOR IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THIS AD.

ASK YOUR DOCTOR IF ZOCOR IS RIGHT FOR YOU.



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To find out if you qualify, call 1-800-MERCK-75.

ZOCOR. It's your future. Be there.

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ZOCOR® (SIMVASTATIN)

PLEASE READ THIS SUMMARY CAREFULLY, THEN ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT ZOCOR. NO ADVERTISEMENT CAN PROVIDE ALL THE INFORMATION NEEDED TO PRESCRIBE A DRUG. THIS ADVERTISEMENT DOES NOT TAKE THE PLACE OF CAREFUL DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUR DOCTOR. ONLY YOUR DOCTOR HAS THE TRAINING TO WEIGH THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF A PRESCRIPTION DRUG FOR YOU.

USES OF ZOCOR

ZOCOR is a prescription drug that is indicated as an addition to diet for many patients with high cholesterol. For patients at high risk of coronary heart disease (CHD) because of existing heart disease, diabetes, vascular disease, or history of stroke, ZOCOR is indicated along with diet to reduce the risk of death by reducing coronary death; reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke; and reduce the need for revascularization procedures.

WHEN ZOCOR SHOULD NOT BE USED

Some people should not take ZOCOR. Discuss this with your doctor.

ZOCOR should not be used by patients who are allergic to any of its ingredients. In addition to the active ingredient simvastatin, each tablet contains the following inactive ingredients: cellulose, lactose, magnesium stearate, iron oxides, talc, titanium dioxide, and starch. Butylated hydroxyanisole is added as a preservative.

Patients with liver problems: ZOCOR should not be used by patients with active liver disease or repeated blood test results indicating possible liver problems. (See WARNINGS.)

Women who are or may become pregnant: Pregnant women should not take ZOCOR because it may harm the fetus. **Women of childbearing age should not take ZOCOR unless it is highly unlikely that they will become pregnant.** If a woman does become pregnant while on ZOCOR, she should stop taking the drug and talk to her doctor at once.

Women who are breast-feeding should not take ZOCOR.

WARNINGS

Muscle: Tell your doctor right away if you experience any unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness at any time during treatment with ZOCOR so your doctor can decide if ZOCOR should be stopped. Some patients may have muscle pain or weakness while taking ZOCOR. Rarely, this can include muscle breakdown resulting in kidney damage. The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients taking certain other drugs along with ZOCOR:

- Cyclosporine, itraconazole, ketoconazole, erythromycin, clarithromycin, HIV protease inhibitors, the antidepressant nefazodone, or large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily), particularly with higher doses of ZOCOR.
- Gemfibrozil particularly with higher doses of ZOCOR.
- Other lipid lowering drugs (other fibrates or ≥ 1 g/day of niacin) that can cause myopathy when given alone.
- Amiodarone or verapamil with higher doses of ZOCOR.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater at higher doses of simvastatin.

Because the risk of muscle side effects is greater when ZOCOR is used with the products listed above, the combined use of these products should be avoided unless your doctor determines the benefits are likely to outweigh the increased risks.

The dose of ZOCOR should not exceed 10 mg daily in patients receiving gemfibrozil. The combined use of ZOCOR and gemfibrozil should be avoided, unless your doctor determines that the benefits outweigh the increased risks of muscle problems. Caution should be used when using ZOCOR with other fibrates or niacin because these can cause muscle problems when taken alone.

No more than 10 mg/day of ZOCOR should be taken with cyclosporine.

The combined use of verapamil or amiodarone with doses above ZOCOR 20 mg should be avoided unless your doctor determines the benefits outweigh the increased risk of muscle breakdown.

Your doctor should also carefully monitor for any muscle pain, tenderness, or weakness, particularly during the initial months of therapy and if the dose of either drug is increased. Your doctor also may monitor the level of certain muscle enzymes in your body, but there is no assurance that such monitoring will prevent the occurrence of severe muscle disease.

The risk of muscle breakdown is greater in patients with kidney problems or diabetes.

If you have conditions that can increase your risk of muscle breakdown, which in turn can cause kidney damage, your doctor should temporarily withhold or stop ZOCOR. Also, since there are no known adverse consequences of briefly stopping therapy with ZOCOR, treatment should be stopped a few days before elective major surgery and when any major acute medical or surgical condition occurs. Discuss this with your doctor, who can explain these conditions to you.

Liver: About 1% of patients who took ZOCOR in clinical trials developed elevated levels of some liver enzymes. Patients who had these increases usually had no symptoms. Elevated liver enzymes usually returned to normal levels when therapy with ZOCOR was stopped.

In the ZOCOR Survival Study, the number of patients with more than 1 liver enzyme level elevation to greater than 3 times the normal upper limit was no different between the ZOCOR and placebo groups. Only 8 patients on ZOCOR and 5 on placebo discontinued therapy due to elevated liver enzyme levels. Patients were started on 20 mg of ZOCOR, and one third had their dose raised to 40 mg.

Your doctor should perform routine blood tests to check these enzymes before you start treatment with ZOCOR and thereafter when clinically indicated. Patients titrated to the 80-mg dose should receive an additional test at 3 months and periodically thereafter (eg, semiannually) for the first year of treatment. If your enzyme levels increase, your doctor should order more frequent tests. If your liver enzyme levels remain unusually high, your doctor should discontinue your medication.

Tell your doctor about any liver disease you may have had in the past and about how much alcohol you consume. ZOCOR should be used with caution in patients who consume large amounts of alcohol.

PRECAUTIONS

Drug Interactions: Because of possible serious drug interactions, it is important to tell your doctor what other drugs you are taking, including those obtained without a prescription. You should also tell other doctors

who are prescribing a new medicine for you that you are taking ZOCOR® (simvastatin). ZOCOR can interact with the following:

- Itraconazole
- Ketoconazole
- Erythromycin
- Clarithromycin
- HIV protease inhibitors
- Nefazodone
- Cyclosporine
- Large quantities of grapefruit juice (>1 quart daily)

The risk of myopathy is also increased by gemfibrozil and to a lesser extent other fibrates and niacin (nicotinic acid) (≥ 1 g/day).

The risk of muscle breakdown is increased with other drugs:

- Amiodarone
- Verapamil

Some patients taking lipid-lowering agents similar to ZOCOR and coumarin anticoagulants (a type of blood thinner) have experienced bleeding and/or increased blood clotting time. Patients taking these medicines should have their blood tested before starting therapy with ZOCOR and should continue to be monitored.

Central Nervous System Toxicity; Cancer, Mutations, Impairment of Fertility: Like most prescription drugs, ZOCOR was required to be tested on animals before it was marketed for human use. Often these tests were designed to achieve higher drug concentrations than humans achieve at recommended dosing. In some tests, the animals had damage to the nerves in the central nervous system. In studies of mice with high doses of ZOCOR, the likelihood of certain types of cancerous tumors increased. No evidence of mutations or of damage to genetic material has been seen. In 1 study with ZOCOR, there was decreased fertility in male rats.

Pregnancy: Pregnant women should not take ZOCOR because it may harm the fetus.

Safety in pregnancy has not been established. In studies with lipid-lowering agents similar to ZOCOR, there have been rare reports of birth defects of the skeleton and digestive system. Therefore, women of childbearing age should not take ZOCOR unless it is highly unlikely they will become pregnant. If a woman does become pregnant while taking ZOCOR, she should stop taking the drug and talk to her doctor at once. The active ingredient of ZOCOR did not cause birth defects in rats at 3 times the human dose or in rabbits at 3 times the human dose.

Nursing Mothers: Drugs taken by nursing mothers may be present in their breast milk. Because of the potential for serious adverse reactions in nursing infants, a woman taking ZOCOR should not breast-feed. (See WHEN ZOCOR SHOULD NOT BE USED.)

Pediatric Use: ZOCOR is not recommended for children or patients under 10 years of age.

Geriatric Use: Higher blood levels of active drug were seen in elderly patients (70–78 years of age) compared with younger patients (18–30 years of age) in 1 study. In other studies, the cholesterol-lowering effects of ZOCOR were at least as great in elderly patients as in younger patients, and there were no overall differences in safety between elderly and younger patients over the 20–80 mg/day dosage range. Of the 7 cases of myopathy/rhabdomyolysis among 10,269 patients on ZOCOR in another study, 4 were aged 65 or more (at baseline), 1 of whom was over 75.

SIDE EFFECTS

Most patients tolerate treatment with ZOCOR well; however, like all prescription drugs, ZOCOR can cause side effects, and some of them can be serious. Side effects that do occur are usually mild and short-lived. Only your doctor can weigh the risks versus the benefits of any prescription drug. In clinical studies with ZOCOR, less than 1.5% of patients dropped out of the studies because of side effects. In 2 large, 5-year studies, patients taking ZOCOR experienced similar side effects to those patients taking placebo (sugar pills). Some of the side effects that have been reported with ZOCOR or related drugs are listed below. This list is not complete. Be sure to ask your doctor about side effects before taking ZOCOR and to discuss any side effects that occur.

Digestive System: Constipation, diarrhea, upset stomach, gas, heartburn, stomach pain/cramps, anorexia, loss of appetite, nausea, inflammation of the pancreas, hepatitis, jaundice, fatty changes in the liver, and, rarely, severe liver damage and failure, cirrhosis, and liver cancer.

Muscle, Skeletal: Muscle cramps, aches, pain, and weakness; joint pain; muscle breakdown.

Nervous System: Dizziness, headache, insomnia, tingling, memory loss, damage to nerves causing weakness and/or loss of sensation and/or abnormal sensations, anxiety, depression, tremor, loss of balance, psychic disturbances.

Skin: Rash, itching, hair loss, dryness, nodules, discoloration.

Eye/Senses: Blurred vision, altered taste sensation, progression of cataracts, eye muscle weakness.

Hypersensitivity (Allergic) Reactions: On rare occasions, a wide variety of symptoms have been reported to occur either alone or together in groups (referred to as a syndrome) that appeared to be based on allergic-type reactions, which may rarely be fatal. These have included 1 or more of the following: a severe generalized reaction that may include shortness of breath, wheezing, digestive symptoms, and low blood pressure and even shock; an allergic reaction with swelling of the face, lips, tongue, and/or throat with difficulty swallowing or breathing; symptoms mimicking lupus (a disorder in which a person's immune system may attack parts of his or her own body); severe muscle and blood vessel inflammation, sometimes including rash; bruises; various disorders of blood cells (that could result in anemia, infection, or blood clotting problems) or abnormal blood tests; inflamed or painful joints; hives; fatigue and weakness; sensitivity to sunlight; fever, chills; flushing; difficulty breathing; and severe skin disorders that vary from rash to a serious burn-like shedding of skin all over the body, including mucous membranes such as the lining of the mouth.

Other: Loss of sexual desire, breast enlargement, impotence.

Laboratory Tests: Liver function test abnormalities including elevated alkaline phosphatase and bilirubin; thyroid function abnormalities.

NOTE: This summary provides important information about ZOCOR. If you would like more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist to let you read the prescribing information and then discuss it with them.



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It was the middle of the day. And I was getting a headache.

Who's Looking Out for You? is not as loud as *Treason*. But there's something of the halftime harangue at the team just in the use of the second-person pronoun.

The answer to O'Reilly's title question could be condensed in the following manner: "Nobody, that's who. The fat cats aren't. The bigwigs aren't. The politicians aren't. Nobody's looking out for you except me, and I can't be everywhere. You've got to look out for yourself. How do you do that? You look out for your friends and family. That's how. And they look out for you. And that's the truth, Bud."

We've all backed away from this fellow while vigorously nodding our heads in agreement. Often the fellow we were backing away from was our own dad.

O'Reilly casts his net wide in search of a nodding, agreeing audience. He embraces people driving poky economy cars ("not imposing gas mileage standards hurts every single American except those making and driving SUVs") and people with romantic memories of the liberalism of yore ("the gold standard for public service was the tenure of Robert Kennedy as attorney general"). He positions himself as a populist worried about illegal aliens' getting across the border and taking our jobs. (I'm worried about illegal aliens' *not* getting across the border and *leaving* us with jobs, such as mowing the lawn and painting the house.) And O'Reilly reaches out to the young by prefacing each chapter with lyrics from pop music groups that are, as far as I know, very up-to-date, such as Spandau Ballet. But the person that O'Reilly's shouting at is still, basically, me: "If President Hillary becomes a reality, the United States will be a polarized, thief-ridden nanny state ..."

Does the left have this problem? Do some liberals feel as if they're guarding the net while their teammates make a furious rush at their own goal? NPR seems more whiny than hectoring, except at fundraising time. There's sup-

posed to be a lot of liberal advocacy on TV. I looked for things that debased freedom, promoted license, ridiculed responsibility, and denigrated man and God—but that was *all* of TV. How do you tell the liberal parts from the car ads? Once more I resorted to books.

To answer my question I didn't even have to open Al Franken's *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them: A Fair and Balanced Look at the Right*. But having done so, I found these chapter headings: "Ann Coulter: Nutcase," "You Know Who I Don't Like? Ann Coulter," and "Bill O'Reilly: Lying Splotchy Bully."

Michael Moore's previous book was *Stupid White Men*, titled in a spirit of gentle persuasion unmatched since Martin Luther, that original Antinomian, wrote *Against the Murderous and Thieving Hordes of Peasants*. Moore's new book, *Dude, Where's My Country?*, contains ten chapters of fulminations convincing the convinced. However, Moore does include one chapter on how to argue with a conservative. As if. Approached by someone like Michael Moore, a conservative would drop a quarter in Moore's Starbucks cup and hurriedly walk away. Also, Moore makes this suggestion: "Tell him how dependable conservatives are. When you need something fixed, you call your redneck brother-in-law, don't you?"

Arguing, in the sense of attempting to convince others, seems to have gone out of fashion with everyone. I'm reduced to arguing with the radio. The distaste for political argument certainly hasn't made politics friendlier—or quieter, given the amount of shouting being done by people who think one thing at people who think the same thing.

But I believe I know why this shouting is popular. Today's Americans are working harder than ever, trying to balance increasing personal, family, and career demands. We just don't have time to make ourselves obnoxious. We need professional help. ■

P.J. O'Rourke is a correspondent for The Atlantic. His most recent book is Peace Kills (2004).

THE ODDS

SADDAM'S FATE



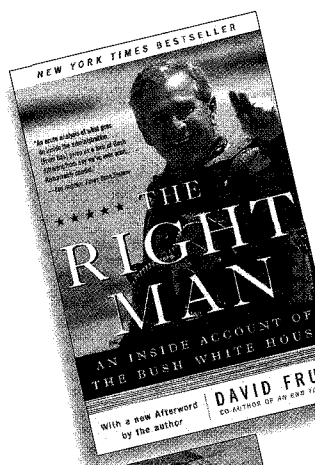
Since his capture, last December, Saddam Hussein has been held by the U.S. military. He is no doubt wondering about his eventual fate, and so are others. BetonSports.com, a UK bookmaker, is offering numerous bets on what will befall the "Butcher of Baghdad" by December 31, 2004. Here is some of the recent action. —MARSHALL POE

- 3 to 2:** will be sentenced to life in prison
- 2 to 1:** will be sentenced to death
- 2 to 1:** will sign a deal with the United States to reveal Osama bin Laden's whereabouts
- 3 to 1:** will be murdered
- 4 to 1:** will be sent to Guantánamo
- 5 to 1:** will commit suicide
- 20 to 1:** will escape prison
- 20 to 1:** will correspond with Michael Jackson
- 30 to 1:** will convert to Christianity and give a testimonial on *The 700 Club*
- 150 to 1:** will be found innocent
- 150 to 1:** will run for President of Iraq
- 150 to 1:** will come out of the closet
- 150 to 1:** will marry Chelsea Clinton
- 150 to 1:** will be a contestant on *American Idol*
- 150 to 1:** will win a Nobel Prize
- 150 to 1:** will golf with Wesley Clark
- 150 to 1:** will date Britney Spears

Marshall Poe is an Atlantic staff researcher.

ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEMOIRISTS

A picture of life inside the Bush White House, as captured by former members of the Administration (and their biographers) in their recent books



DAVID FRUM
PRESIDENTIAL
SPEECHWRITER

THE PRESIDENT'S GREATEST WEAKNESS

He's anti-intellectual:

"If you looked around the Bush cabinet table ... you saw a number of very able, solid, reliable people—but only one, Donald Rumsfeld, whose mind could truly be said to sparkle. And if you looked more narrowly at the White House staff, there was again a dearth of really high-powered brains. One seldom heard an unexpected thought in the Bush White House or met someone who possessed unusual knowledge."

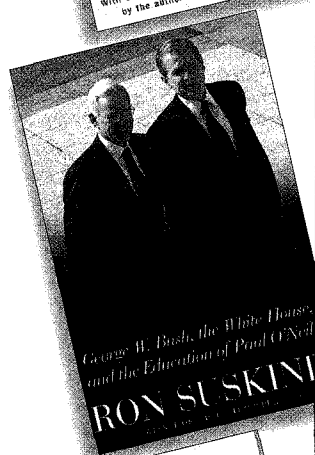
THE FORMER STAFFER'S (INADVERTENTLY REVEALED) GREATEST WEAKNESS

He favors dubious historical analogies:

"The choice that divided Grant from McClellan in 1862 was the same choice that divided Powell from Rumsfeld ...

"The relationship between the terror organizations and the terror states resembled the Tokyo-Rome-Berlin Axis ...

"The critics who argued that we ought to keep mum about the mullahs were often the very same people who had argued in the 1980s that we ought to accommodate ourselves to the Soviet Union."



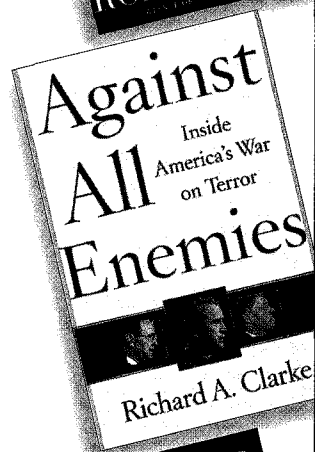
PAUL O'NEILL
SECRETARY OF
THE TREASURY

He's disengaged:

"O'Neill was watching Bush closely. He threw out a few general phrases, a few nods, but there was virtually no engagement. These cabinet secretaries had worked for over a month on detailed reports. O'Neill had been made to understand ... that the President should not be expected to read reports. In his personal experience, the President didn't even appear to have read the short memos he sent over."

He's a busybody:

"In the first cabinet meeting ... [O'Neill] had passed out copies of his Alcoa booklet on global climate change to a half-dozen cabinet members, including Christie Whitman, who seemed surprised ... that O'Neill was encroaching on her turf. In the February 1 NSC meeting on Iraq, O'Neill had questioned Rumsfeld about the ability of the United States to attack Iraqi batteries that were firing at American military planes ... He requested a meeting with Education Secretary Rod Paige to discuss ways to energize the education debate. Paige wondered what O'Neill wanted to talk about. 'Everything,' O'Neill said."



RICHARD CLARKE
ADVISER ON
COUNTERTERRORISM

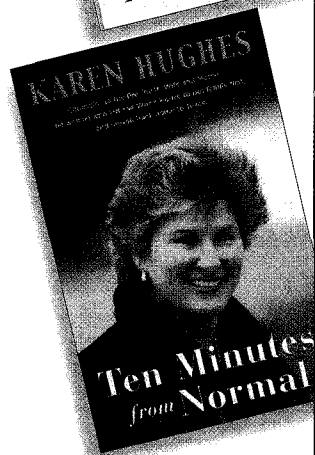
He's obsessed with Iraq:

"Far from addressing the popular appeal of the enemy that attacked us, Bush handed that enemy precisely what it wanted and needed ... It was as if Usama bin Laden, hidden in some high mountain redoubt, were engaging in long-range mind control of George Bush, chanting 'invade Iraq, you must invade Iraq.'"

He thinks he's Indiana Jones:

"The bottom line ... was that Usama bin Laden had put out a contract on the American Terrorism Czar, Dick Clarke ...

"Now we had the full attention of the bureaucracies and the full support of the President. I had to get back to the White House and begin planning to prevent follow-on attacks. I found my Secret Service-issued .357 sidearm, thrust it into my belt, and went back out into the night, back to the West Wing."



KAREN HUGHES
COUNSELOR TO
THE PRESIDENT

He's too good for the presidency:

"I thought George Bush would be a wonderful president—I also thought he was too decent a person to wish the presidency on him ...

"It's one of the things I like best about him: it's not all about him. He's too normal to be the president, I remember thinking, in the very best sense of the word."

She's a control freak:

"But I didn't do my job the way the Washington press expected. I was too 'on message,' they complained—they couldn't get anything out of me. I wouldn't give up on even little things; I wouldn't let my hair down ... Too serious, relentlessly on message, disciplined; thus the nickname Nurse Ratched ... I always suspected Howard Fineman of *Newsweek* did the christening."

THE INSCRUTABILITY OF DICK CHENEY

"Cheney would sit at the table's head, frowning and nodding as he listened, seldom speaking even a single word. His words were all reserved for Bush's ears."

"Dick was not a talker. His cards, held close, were virtually never shown. He could seem reassuring, even sympathetic ... But you could never be certain what he was thinking or what he would do."

From the Index:

"Cheney, Richard, inscrutable demeanor of, 2, 44, 46, 47, 48, 120, 135, 292"

"On the surface, [Cheney] was quiet and soft-spoken ... the quiet often hid views that would seem out of place if aired more broadly ...

"Cheney was, as ever, quiet and calm on the surface. The wheels were spinning behind the mask."

"The amount [Cheney] says is inversely proportional to the number of people in the room; he speaks much more openly in small meetings than in large ones. People always sit forward and listen intently whenever he says anything."

THAT WACKY BUSH WHITE HOUSE

"The Bush staff rose to their feet with a snap that would have impressed a Prussian field marshal. When Bush was in a kidding mood, he would direct the staff like an orchestra conductor: He would press his hands palms down to direct them to sit and then, when they had taken their seats, raise his hands palms up to order them to rise again. Only then would they get the final palms-down."

"'Hey, let's take the tunnel to Treasury,' Bush said, smiling ... They moved one way, backtracked, went down another hall, and then did it again. They were lost. Eventually, they found a hallway that stretched northwest, in the general direction of Treasury. That must be it,' Bush said ... They emerged into the basement of Treasury, where a maintenance worker, moving boxes, looked at them as though he'd seen a ghost. Bush laughed—'We made it'—and suddenly gave the startled worker a hug."

"On one screen, I could see the Situation Room. I grabbed Mike Fenzel. 'How's it going over here?' I asked. 'It's fine,' Major Fenzel whispered, 'but I can't hear the crisis conference because Mrs. Cheney keeps turning down the volume on you so she can hear CNN ...'"

"The atmosphere inside [Bush's] ranch house was warm and festive ... [Mrs. Putin] wore a sequined vest in red, white, and blue. Ambassador Dan Fried and Condi Rice danced to "Cotton-Eyed Joe" performed by a western swing group. The Ranch Hands. Concert pianist Van Cliburn talked about his affection for Russia, 'I would say to my Russian friends, please come to Texas because our personalities are so close.'"

MOMENTS OF 9/11-RELATED HEROISM

"My wife called again, her voice taut and strained. 'The White House will be next! You have to get out of there—don't wait, please hurry!'

"I felt a surge of ... what? Battle fever? Mulishness?

"I only remember how hot my ears felt. 'No!' I said fiercely. 'No! I am not leaving!'"

"O'Neill was offered a seat in the cockpit. 'No,' he said. 'I'd rather sit with the troops.'

"The floor of the plane was grooved and porous ... and icy cold. Not a problem. He'd slept on worse. So the leading domestic official of the U.S. government pulled the blanket around his shoulders and—in his blue suit, red tie, and wingtips—shivered off to sleep as the C-17 raced toward America."

"I ran through the West Wing ... oblivious to the stares and concern ... 'Okay, Dick,' Condi [Rice] said, 'you're the crisis manager, what do you recommend?'...

"'We're putting together a secure teleconference to manage the crisis,' I replied ...

"'Secret Service wants us to go to the bomb shelter,' Condi added.

"I nodded. 'I would and ... I would evacuate the White House.'"

"Heading back into the heart of Washington became more than a duty; it was also an act of faith. Like a soldier going into battle, or a patient who learns he has a life-threatening disease, I had to confront my mortality, decide whether I truly believed what I said I did."

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"More inbred, secretive, and vindictive than the Mafia ..."

"Dynamic, energetic, passionate."

SELL THE HOLBEIN, KEEP THE HOUSE

Andrew Cavendish, 11th Duke of Devonshire (1920–2004)

In Britain, Digby Anderson has just published a pamphlet called *All Oiks Now*—"oik" being British for a loud, coarse, vulgar, unpleasant, common little man, and Anderson's thesis being that this unfortunate breed today has the run of England's formerly green and pleasant land. Writing to *The Daily Telegraph* from her castle in Scotland, Lady Borthwick was inclined to agree.

Sir—In the week in which the splendid obituary of the Duke of Devonshire appeared, I am writing to say that I agree with Digby Anderson that this is a country fit only for oiks. Sadly, anyone speaking proper Queen's English is now derided as a toff. This country will rise from its present position near the gutter only when once again we have Members of Parliament who have spent time in the real world, perhaps in the Armed Forces, or indeed are from a land-owning family, brought up with a sense of duty to those around them.

A tall, dapper aristocrat, Andrew Cavendish, 11th Duke of Devonshire, fulfilled all Lady Borthwick's criteria for a model public servant: He spoke the Queen's English, rather more grandly than Her Majesty. He won the Military Cross for capturing and holding a hill in Italy despite being surrounded. His family owned thousands of acres of prime land in England, Ireland, and Scotland. And he descended from a long line of dutiful patricians: the 2nd duke was Steward of Queen Anne's Household, the 3rd and 4th were Lords-Lieutenant of Ireland, his grandfather was Governor-General of Canada, and his father was Under-Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.

All the same, he would have been reluctant to sign on to Lady Borthwick and Digby Anderson's general line on the depths to which his countrymen have sunk.

For one thing, he disliked rudeness and, even in the midst of Britain's descent into Hogarthian depravity, believed in looking on the bright side. He was, after all, the patron-in-chief of the Polite Society, with its Campaign for Courtesy and its polite, courteous logo of a gentle-

man doffing his hat. The duke decided there was a need for a Polite Society after he thanked a taxi driver for taking him home one night and the grateful cabbie "put his gnarled old hand on my gnarled old hand and said: 'You've no idea the difference a kind word makes.'"

For another, he was a genuine English patriot. In the 1980s, when a London court case brought to light his prodigious philanthropy, the duke seemed to think it his duty, even in the midst of momentary public dis-

comfort, to do his bit for the home team. "English girls are the loveliest in the world," he said. "As for a dalliance, well, the French have their strengths and the Italians are very agreeable. But if you want my advice, stick to English women." And so, for the most part, he did.

And the final reason the duke would have eschewed the Borthwick line is that he had an aristocratic reluctance to make a fuss. He displayed great physical courage in Italy but insisted for the next sixty years that he'd been given the Military Cross merely for "being cheerful." As one son of privilege eyeing another, he would have found John Kerry's war-hero campaign commercials utterly cringe-making. He was a modest man—or, at any rate, a man shrewd enough to understand that in postwar socialist Britain, modesty behooves a duke.

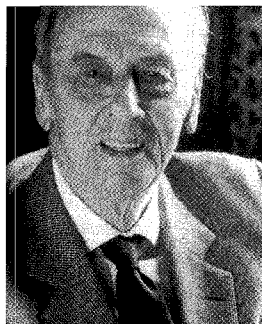
In the 1960s he served as Britain's Minister of State for Colonial Affairs, an eminence he attributed to the fact that his uncle (Harold Macmillan) happened to be Prime Minister. But those were busy days at the Colonial Office: the duke midwived eleven newly independent nations, which is no mean accomplishment. Yet he brushed it aside, and, asked how he rubbed along with notoriously uncooperative Afro-Marxist revolutionaries, he was at pains to emphasize how frightfully decent they were. "I got on well with

the Africans," he'd say. "They were very jolly." "Andrew is awfully good with natives," Uncle Harold observed.

And so, cloaking a sharp wit and canny instincts in the traditional virtues of diffidence and self-deprecation, the Duke of Devonshire somehow survived and prospered as a duke in a very unducal age. Dukes are an endangered species these days—there are just twenty-four in the whole of Britain, if you discount the royal ones, such as the Duke of York (Prince Andrew)—and by the time of his death Devonshire was the best-known duke in the land.

Insofar as he's known to Americans at all, it's through one of the many graves on his estate—that of Kathleen Kennedy, daughter of Joe, sister of Jack, and sister-in-law of Andrew Cavendish. In 1944 "Kick" married Andrew's older brother, the Marquess of Hartington. Four months later Hartington was killed in action, leaving Kick a widow and Andrew the

heir to the dukedom. One of the 10th duke's pleasures was to essay some occasional physical exertion in his own behalf, rather than leaving it all to the servants, and he was particularly partial to sawing up fallen trees for his fireplaces. While doing this at the family's seaside home



at Eastbourne in 1950, he suffered a massive thrombosis and died. He was fifty-five, which made it not just tragic but expensive: he was just months shy of qualification for a reduced level of "death duties." Andrew was left owing 80 percent of his inheritance to the government.

Britain in the fifties was a grim, gray place: wartime rationing was still in effect, under the modified catchall heading of "postwar austerity." Many peers found it easier to sell the crumbling old stately pile and retire to the Caribbean or the Riviera. Chatsworth, the Devonshire estate, has seventeen staircases and fifty-six toilets (or "lavatories," as the duke would have said). That's great, if you can

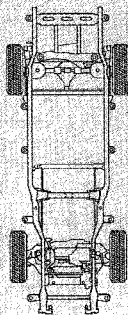
POST
MORTEM

MARK
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afford fifty-six rolls of toilet paper and fifty-six cakes of soap every time you go to the store, and if you've got a plumber on staff. But, besieged by confiscatory class-war taxation, many of England's great country homes were by the 1950s little more than poky apartments with a couple of space heaters in the middle of a vast abandoned ruin.

The 11th duke considered his options and determined to save what had been his family's home for four centuries. He sold the Holbein, and a Rembrandt, and the family's prized Anglo-Saxon manuscript, the Benedictional of Saint Ethelwold. And then he set about playing for time and discovered that the notorious indolence of an effete aristocracy was nothing alongside the bureaucratic inertia of socialist tax collectors. He carefully noted how long the Inland Revenue took to reply to his letters, and made a point of taking as long to reply to theirs, less one day. By this method, which the Revenue never noticed, he dragged out the final settlement of death duties for seventeen years.

By the end, Chatsworth was saved. Today hundreds of thousands of tourists visit the palatial family home each year, yet the duke and his chatelaine, Debo (the most perfectly poised of the Mitford sisters, at least politically), never had to go to the same desperate lengths as some fellow landowners. The Marquess of Bath turned his place, Longleat, into a wildlife park in order to serve the surprisingly large niche market that likes to see lions and tigers roaming around a stately home. "We stayed upmarket," Devonshire liked to say. Tom Jones will sing at Chatsworth this summer, but there'll be less panty-hurling than at his Vegas gigs.

The Devonshire strategy was not as successfully applied to politics. By mid-century noblesse oblige had decayed in Britain's insecure ruling class into a weary fatalism about imperial decline. Just as the duke accepted that he could never keep all his inheritance, so he assumed that his nation couldn't either: as with his father's estate, it was a question

of tactical surrenders, retrenchment, holding on to what was feasible. There was a ratchet effect in British politics, and all a Conservative could hope to do was slow it down. In the mid-1970s, with the country a socialist basket case, Devonshire's party turned to Margaret Thatcher. She wasn't noblesse and she was disinclined to oblige: she wanted to reverse Britain's decay, not provide genteel oversight.

The duke wasn't the only grandee uncomfortable with the new management. Noting the Iron Lady's preference for Jews, Harold Macmillan remarked that hers was the first Tory Cabinet with more Estonians than Etonians. In the 1980s Devonshire left the Conservatives for the new Social Democratic Party, a breakaway group of Labour Party "moderates." I first met him around that time, when his sister-in-law introduced us at an art exhibition. He was wry and amusing, but I couldn't help feeling that, though the analysts' frequent complaint about the SDP was that it was "too middle-class," signing up an 11th duke was approaching the problem from the wrong end. The SDP eventually faded away, and by the end of his life Devonshire was a supporter of the UK Independence Party, an even smaller breakaway group, founded to resist Britain's submersion into the European Union. Like Mrs. Thatcher, the duke finally found a ratchet effect he wanted to arrest. The old virtues—chin up, keep muddling through—will get you only so far.

They have dukes in Europe, of course—even in the republics, such as France and Germany. But, as Devonshire's sister-in-law Nancy Mitford once wrote, "an aristocracy in a republic is like a chicken whose head has been cut off: it may run about in a lively way, but in fact it is dead." Whether or not the same holds true for Britain's new oikocracy, Andrew Cavendish, Duke of Devonshire, managed to run about livelier and longer than most of the other chickens. ■

Mark Steyn is a columnist for Britain's Telegraph Group, the Chicago Sun-Times, and other publications.



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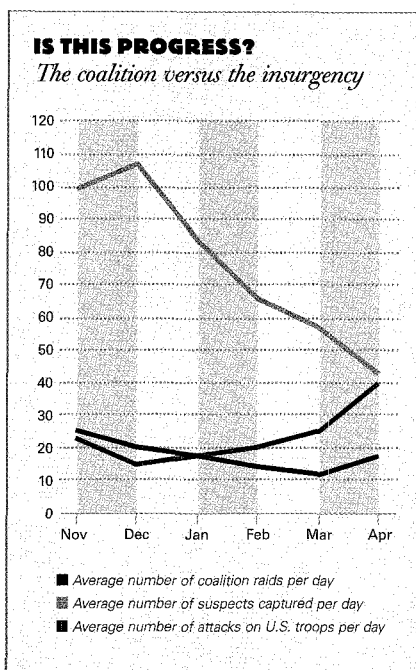
A report card on Iraq; why gambling is good for business; the Muslim passion for Mel Gibson; winners and losers in the modern marriage pool

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Iraq by the Numbers

In March the Departments of Defense and State released decidedly upbeat reports on a "year of progress" in Iraq. A strikingly different assessment can be found in the Brookings Institution's Iraq Index, a frequently updated statistical summary that tracks data on reconstruction and security in the country. For instance, whereas Defense and State contend that there are now more Iraqi security forces than coalition forces protecting the citizenry, Brookings finds that only 65 percent of the 196,766-person indigenous security force is "partially or fully trained." (Tellingly, training levels are at 100 percent for those Iraqis tasked with guarding oil and electricity installations and serving as drivers and interpreters for coalition forces.) Moreover, Brookings reports, the nascent Iraqi army has fewer than 3,000 men, and 480 of the 900 Iraqis in the first new army battalion resigned shortly after being put on active duty. The State Department claims that the current violence in Iraq is due in large part to "foreign terrorists." The Brookings report notes, however, that fewer than two percent of the 8,500 "anti-coalition suspects" detained in Iraq are foreign nationals. The State Department also says that electrical-power levels "exceeded pre-war capacity" in the fall of 2003. This is technically true: on a single day last fall electrical-power levels exceeded pre-war capacity. The monthly average for electricity production, however, has yet to reach pre-war levels. Meanwhile, potable water is available to only two thirds of the population. There is some good news in these reports: the value of the Iraqi dinar is rising; oil revenues have passed \$5 billion; all hospitals in Iraq are open, with 90 percent operating at pre-war levels; and the unemployment rate has decreased from 60 percent in June of 2003 to 45 percent earlier this year. Perhaps the brightest spot is education: more than 2,300 schools have been rehabilitated by USAID, millions of new textbooks have been printed and distributed, and teachers' salaries are far higher than under the former regime.

—"The New Iraq: A Year of Progress," U.S. Department of Defense; "Iraq One Year Later: Freedom and Progress," U.S. Department of State; "Iraq Index: Tracking Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq," Brookings Institution



High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program (HAARP), which was originally designed to "capture energy from the aurora borealis" and now aims to "heat the ionosphere to improve military communications." It's no coincidence that HAARP, which has absorbed nearly a hundred million federal dollars since 1995, is an Alaska-based project: the state's senior senator, the Republican Ted Stevens, chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee—and Alaska procured more pork per capita than any other state in 2004, with \$524 million in appropriations. Stevens is hardly a solitary offender: runners-up in the *Pig Book's* pork rankings were, in order, Hawaii, Washington, D.C., New Hampshire, West Virginia, and Montana, all of which (except for Washington) have senators on the Appropriations Committee.

—2004 Congressional Pig Book Summary, Citizens Against Government Waste

Betting on Bankruptcy

Every year Americans lose as much money on legal gambling as they spend on movies, amusement parks, spectator sports, and video games combined—which is one reason that opponents of legalized casinos claim that gambling leads to financial ruin for many Americans. Yet proponents claim that legalized gambling is a boon to local economies. According to a recent study by scholars at Creighton University, in Omaha, Nebraska, both the critics and the boosters are right. Looking at the gambling boom years of the 1990s, when casino revenues more than tripled nationally, the researchers conclude that counties with casinos suffered individual bankruptcy rates more than double the rates in demographically similar counties without casinos. But the bankruptcy rate for *businesses* in these "casino counties" was 35 percent *lower* than in their betting-free counterparts.

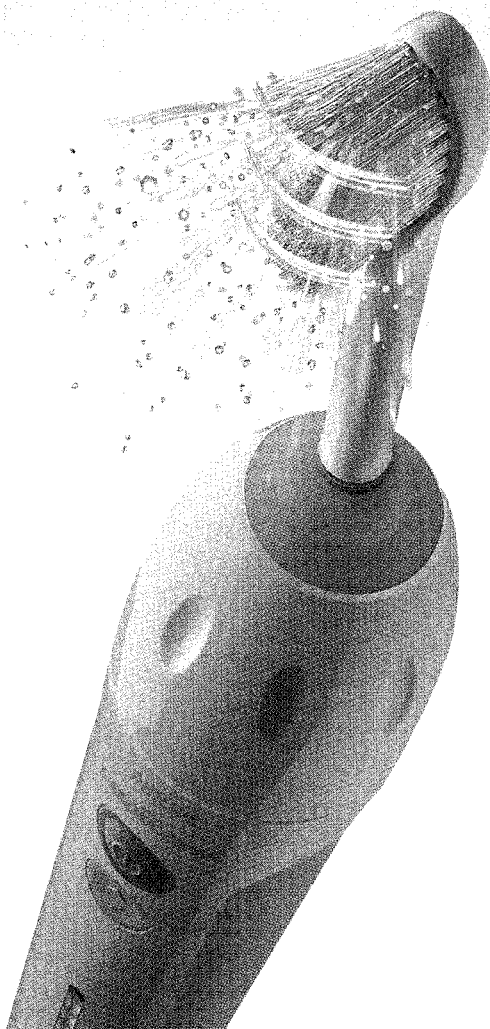
—"The Impact of Casino Gambling on Bankruptcy Rates: A County Level Analysis," Ernie Goss and Edward Morse, Creighton University

THE NATION

Pigs at the Trough

The budget deficit stands at \$521 billion, and the national debt at \$7.1 trillion—but neither number has taken the edge off Congress's appetite for pork-barrel politics. According to the annual *Pig Book*, published by Citizens Against Government Waste, the 2004 fiscal year saw a record 10,656 projects tacked on to

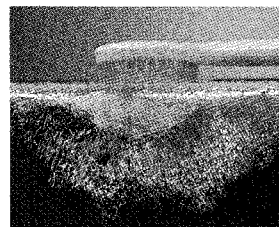
Congress's appropriations bills—up 13 percent from the previous year and 28 percent from 2002, for a total cost to federal taxpayers of \$22.9 billion. Choice slices of pork listed in the *Pig Book* include \$50 million to build the world's largest indoor rain forest in Coralville, Iowa; hundreds of thousands of dollars for "poultry litter composting" and "berry research"; and \$5 million for the



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SOCIETY

The Passion of the Arab World

Traditional Muslim belief accords Jesus Christ prophetic rather than divine status, insists that he was taken up to heaven before the Crucifixion, and frowns on artistic representation of religious figures. Nonetheless, Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is a hit in the Middle East, where Arab reaction to the film—as documented by the Middle East Media Research Institute—has less to do with theology than with current regional politics. That is, Muslims seem to see the film as all about Israel and, to a lesser extent, Iraq. “The Palestinians are still being exposed to the kind of pain to which Jesus was exposed during his crucifixion,” Yasir Arafat’s media adviser recently announced. A columnist in the Syrian government daily *Teshreen* made similar comparisons between Gibson’s Christ and those who “are crucified every day at the hands of the American and Jewish-Zionist executioners,” adding, “Now the Iraqi people are facing the same ordeal and walking the same Via Dolorosa.” One director in Qatar insisted that “the film does not depict Judaism or all Jews as responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus,” but most of *The Passion*’s most enthusiastic Muslim fans disagreed: Egypt’s government-owned daily declared the film a “courageous challenge to the political, financial and media power of the Jews,” and Kuwait’s leading Shia cleric lobbied the government to let it be shown in his country—despite its conflicts with Islamic teachings—because it would present “a good opportunity to reveal the crimes committed by Jews against the Christ and many other prophets.” But perhaps the most intriguing interpretation came from the Saudi journalist who wrote that *The Passion of the Christ* should persuade Arabs to stop blaming the Jews for the Middle East’s troubles. Why? Because “if the Jews had ultimate control over Hollywood and what happens there, as our fathers, grandfathers, writers and books say, a film against them would not be produced by the hub of the world’s film industry!”

—“Reactions in the Arab Media to *The Passion of the Christ*,” Middle East Media Research Institute

ARAB BOX OFFICE: *The Passion of the Christ*

Country	Receipts to date	Opening weekend	#2 film same weekend (receipts)
TURKEY	\$1,839,059	\$585,138	<i>The Butterfly Effect</i> (\$147,306)
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	\$1,343,400	\$541,700	<i>Cheaper By the Dozen</i> (\$100,100)
LEBANON	\$1,187,416	\$300,000*	<i>Something's Gotta Give</i> (\$103,600)
EGYPT	\$203,603	\$111,171	<i>Ahla al-Awkat</i> (\$54,055)

*second weekend

The Indulgence Effect

Although it’s safe to say that few people since Martin Luther’s time have actually bought an indulgence, Americans are keeping the practice alive in spirit, paying out for the good of their souls while letting other religious obligations slide. A recent study by an MIT economist finds that, on average, for every one percent increase in a household’s donations to religious groups, participation in faith-related activities, including at-

tendance at services, declines by one percent. Economists have long wondered whether religious participation and religious giving tend to rise in tandem, or whether people view giving as a substitute for participation. For every religious denomination studied, the latter seemed to be true: write a bigger check, it appears, and you’ll feel better about shirking services on Sunday (or Friday night, or Saturday, depending on your faith). This indulgence effect, as

one might call it, was least pronounced among conservative Protestants (who were only half as likely as the average to supplant churchgoing with donations), followed by Roman Catholics, who appear to have left “As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from Purgatory springs” back in the sixteenth century.

—“Pay or Pray? The Impact of Charitable Subsidies on Religious Attendance,” Jonathan Gruber, National Bureau of Economic Research

Gentlemen Prefer Brains

Do single women in possession of a top-of-the-line education have a hard time finding a husband? So some believe, and there is evidence to support the idea. As a new study by a University of Washington economics professor points out, female “hypergammy” (the tendency to marry upward with respect to social status, education, and income) is the norm in many societies, and widespread hypergammy inevitably disadvantages well-educated women, who have nowhere to marry up to. But as women’s overall education levels have risen in the United States, marriage prospects for educated women have also markedly improved. In 1980 a woman in her early forties with nineteen years of education had just a 66 percent chance of being married, compared with 83 percent for one with twelve years of education; today that gap has disappeared. The real losers in the modern marriage market are not career women but poorly educated men, and particularly black men. Though hypergammy may be declining among the professional classes, less-educated women still tend to reach up the social ladder when they marry, leaving a host of unmarriageable males stuck below.

—“Education and Hypergammy in Marriage Markets,” Elaina Rose, University of Washington

For links to the reports and documents discussed in these pages visit www.theatlantic.com/issues/2004/08/primarysources.htm



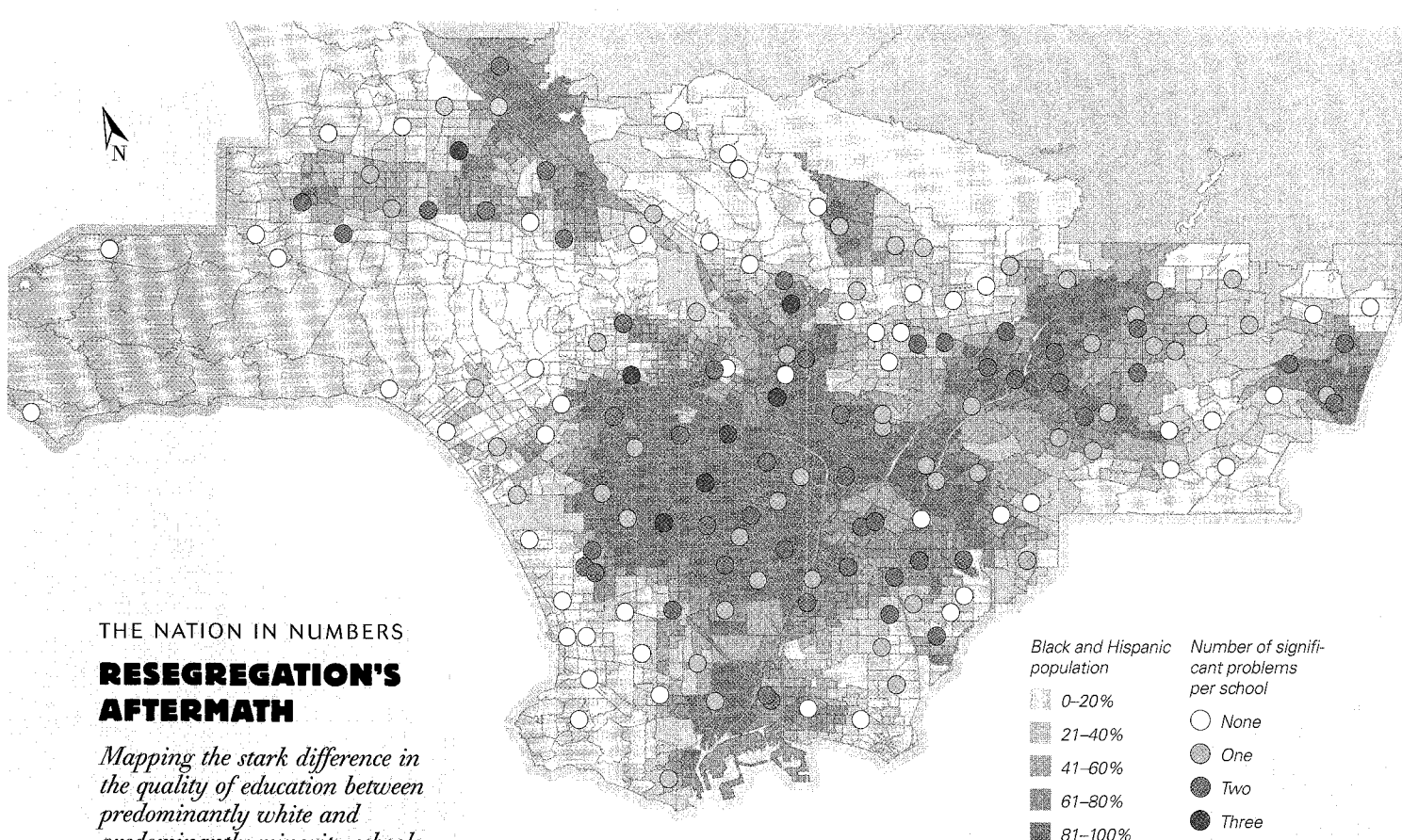
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THE NATION IN NUMBERS

RESEGREGATION'S AFTERMATH

Mapping the stark difference in the quality of education between predominantly white and predominantly minority schools

Fifty years ago in May, *Brown v. Board of Education* made segregated public education illegal. By 1990 the complexion of the nation's public schools had changed dramatically: individual schools more closely reflected the racial balance of the district in which they were located, and black students attended class with nearly twice as many white children, on average, as they had two decades previously.

But integration had already begun to lose momentum in the early 1970s. In fact, by some measures public schools have now been resegregating for more than a decade. Partly as a consequence, white children today have access to much better educational opportunities, on average, than do their minority counterparts.

Consider Los Angeles County. The accompanying map was generated by Jeannie Oakes, the director of the Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access at UCLA, using data she has collected on a range of "opportunity to learn" indicators. A white dot represents a high school with no significant problems. A gray dot identifies a school that has a serious problem with its teachers (fewer than 80 percent are certified by

the state), its curriculum (fewer than two thirds of the available courses prepare students for a four-year college), or its facilities (buildings are so crowded that students must attend school in shifts, effectively shortening the academic year by seventeen days or more). The more areas in which a school has problems, the darker the dot.

A quick glance at the map reveals that problems are more common in schools located in predominantly black and Hispanic neighborhoods. The worst schools—the seven exhibiting serious problems with teachers, curricula, *and* facilities—collectively educate a population that is 94 percent black and Hispanic. Meanwhile, not a single L.A. County school that is more than 90 percent white and Asian exhibits any serious problems with teachers, curricula, or facilities. Only 16 percent of the region's black and Hispanic students attend a school with none of the serious problems Oakes tracks; more than half (58 percent) of the region's white and Asian students do.

Numerous studies show that the caliber of teachers, the rigor of curricula, and the quality of facilities vary according to the race of the student body in

public schools throughout the country. Teachers in predominantly black schools, for example, are less likely than teachers in predominantly white schools to have proper credentials or extensive teaching experience, to hold even a minor in the relevant subject, or to have attended a competitive college.

Not surprisingly, these differences matter. In L.A. County, graduation rates and college-preparedness rates for all races rise steadily with school quality. Indeed, both graduation rates and college-preparedness rates are twice as high in the best schools (those with no problems on Oakes's scales) as in the worst (those with problems in all three areas). Nationwide, 75 percent of white ninth-graders will graduate from high school in four years; barely half of black and Hispanic ninth-graders will. And even among those twelfth-grade black students who do graduate from high school, the average score on the standardized National Assessment of Educational Progress test is lower than the average score of white eighth-graders. This puts minority children on an unequal footing not only while they're in school but later in life as well.

—BRAD HOLST



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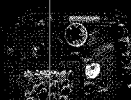




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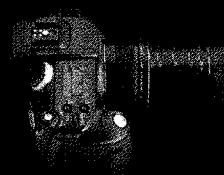
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WHEN GEORGE MEETS JOHN

Presidential debates always put more importance on projecting character than on being right. George W. Bush and John Kerry can both boast of never having lost a debate, though the two candidates rely on strikingly dissimilar sets of skills. A viewer's guide to this fall's version of "asymmetric warfare"

BY JAMES FALLOWS

Illustrations by John Ritter

.....

Recently I saw an amazing piece of political video. It was ten-year-old footage of George W. Bush, and it changed my mind about an important aspect of the upcoming campaign. Because the President so rarely exposes himself to live, unscripted questioning, and because he has expressed himself so poorly the few times he has risked such exposure this year, the political establishment assumes that John Kerry has a big advantage in this fall's debates.

I'm not so sure. Bush has been far more skillful in his debating career than is generally appreciated, and his successes in that realm put his widely noted lack of eloquence in a different light. During his career George Bush's speaking style has changed significantly, which is why the tape from 1994 was so intriguing. But his underlying approach to political communication has been constant—and extremely effective.

In 1994 Bush was an underdog candidate for the governorship of Texas. The incumbent, Ann Richards, was a phenomenon renowned above all for her biting wit. She had attended Baylor University in the 1950s on a debate scholarship. She had become the star of the 1988 Democratic convention with a keynote speech that mocked the elder George Bush: "Poor George. He can't help it! He was born with a silver foot in his mouth." When she first ran for governor, in 1990, Richards made a fool of her Republican opponent, Clayton Williams, with barbs and repartee that provoked him into intemperate outbursts.

As Richards prepared to run for re-election, she faced several obstacles. Newt Gingrich's "Contract With America" was about to help the Republicans take control of Congress. The growth of the suburbs was accelerating Texas's

shift from a solidly Democratic to a solidly Republican state. And Richards seemed visibly to have lost passion for her job. Her relatively young and inexperienced opponent, whose lackluster business career was his main credential, seemed to be the least of her problems—especially when it came to speaking skills. So great was Richards's perceived rhetorical advantage that the Bush campaign stonewalled in debate negotiations and finally agreed to one debate only, to be held on a Friday night in October two weeks before the election.

This spring I watched dozens of hours' worth of old videos of John Kerry and George W. Bush in action. But it was the hour in which Bush faced Ann Richards that I had to watch several times. The Bush on this tape was almost unrecognizable—and not just because he looked different from the figure we are accustomed to in the White House. He was younger, thinner, with much darker hair and a more eager yet less swaggering carriage than he has now. But the real difference was the way he sounded.

This Bush was eloquent. He spoke quickly and easily. He rattled off complicated sentences and brought them to the right grammatical conclusions. He mishandled a word or two ("million" when he clearly meant "billion"; "stole" when he meant "sold"), but fewer than most people would in an hour's debate. More striking, he did not pause before forcing out big words, as he so often does now, or invent mangled new ones. "To lay out my juvenile-justice plan in a minute and a half is a hard task, but I will try to do so," he said fluidly and with a smile midway through the debate, before beginning to list his principles.

Richards's main line of attack—in fact, her

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only one—was that Bush had done so poorly in a series of businesses that he would be over his head as governor. Each time she tried this, Bush calmly said, “I think this is a diversion away from talking about the issues that face Texas”—which led him right back to the items on his stump speech (“I want to discuss welfare, education. I want to discuss the juvenile-justice system ...”). When talking about schools he said, “I think the mission in education ought to be excellence in literature, math, science, and social science”—an ordinary enough thought, but one delivered with an offhand fluency I do not remember his ever showing at a presidential press conference. When Richards was asked about permitting casino gambling, she replied with a convoluted, minutes-long answer with details about Indian tribal rights. Bush, when asked the same question, had simply said, “I’m against casino gambling”—and when asked, after Richards’s discourse, if he wanted to elaborate, said, “Not really.” For years I had been told by people who knew Bush from business school or from Texas politics that he was

The Bush I saw on the ten-year-old debate tape from Texas was almost unrecognizable. This Bush was eloquent. He spoke quickly and easily. He rattled off complicated sentences and brought them to the right grammatical conclusions.

keenly smart—though perhaps in a way that didn’t come across in his public statements. Perhaps! The man on the debate platform looked and sounded smart and in control. If you had to guess which of the two candidates had won the debate scholarship to college and was about to win the governorship, you would choose Bush.

I bored my friends by forcing them to watch the tape—but I could tell that I had not bored George Lakoff, a linguist from the University of California at Berkeley, who has written often of the importance of metaphor and emotional message in political communications. When I invited him to watch the Bush-Richards tape, Lakoff confirmed that everything about Bush’s surface style was different. His choice of words, the pace of his speech, the length and completeness of his sentences, all made him sound like another person. Even his body language was surprising. When he was younger, Bush leaned toward the camera and did not fidget or shift his weight. He arched his eyebrows and positioned his mouth in a way that, according to Lakoff, signifies in all languages an intense, engaged form of speech.

Lakoff also emphasized that what had changed in Bush’s style was less important than what had remained the

same. Bush’s ways of appealing to his electoral base, of demonstrating resolve and strength, of deflecting rather than rebutting criticism, had all worked against Ann Richards. These have been constants in his rhetorical presentation of himself over the years, despite the striking decline in his sentence-by-sentence speaking skills, and they have been consistently and devastatingly effective. The upcoming debates between Bush and Kerry will in an odd way be a contest of unbeaten champions.

Neither George Bush nor John Kerry has suffered more than an occasional lapse or setback in a debate. Neither has “lost” a contest in the only way that matters: a serious post-debate decline in the polls or an electoral defeat. Bush’s achievement is the more surprising, because he has entered every debate at a presumed disadvantage and has had to be a giant-slayer. Ann Richards was the most celebrated orator in Texas, having succeeded U.S. Representative Barbara Jordan in that role. Garry Mauro, whom Bush trounced in his re-election campaign in 1998, was an experienced and knowledgeable Texas official. In 2000 Bush’s main opponent in the presidential primaries, John McCain, was beloved by the press for his mordant “straight talk.” And in the general election Bush had to face Al Gore, who until then had manhandled a long series of debate opponents. Bush beat every one of them—in the election and, to judge by post-debate poll results, in the debates as well. The contests between Bush and Kerry this year will be a political version of what the Pentagon calls “asymmetric warfare,” or combat between opponents with dissimilar strengths and vulnerabilities. The approach each side takes to asymmetric combat reveals basic traits relating to values and internal organization. This year’s onstage asymmetric political combat will reveal basic traits in the character and leadership styles of the two candidates.

Debates make a big difference in presidential politics, but not for reasons taught in logic class. Typically they are the only time the major candidates meet face to face. Therefore they give the public its main chance to size up the candidates physically, emotionally, and—least important—on their ability to give knowledgeable answers.

Only once in modern history has the substance of a presidential candidate’s comments in a debate mattered politically. That was in 1976, when the incumbent, Gerald Ford, appeared to say that Poland, then part of the Soviet bloc, was not subject to Communist control. A fair-minded observer could parse what Ford was trying to say—that the free spirit of the Polish people would never be quashed. But the episode fit Ford’s image as a bumbler and gave Jimmy Carter a decisive debate “win.”

In every other modern case wins and losses in presidential debates have turned on revelations of a candidate’s personality, character, and temperament. In 1960 John Kennedy looked fit, elegant, and confident, and largely

through stage presence made himself the equal of the much more experienced Richard Nixon. In 1980 Ronald Reagan made Jimmy Carter look small-minded and fact-bound when he answered Carter's criticism of his position on Medicare by saying, "There you go again!" In 1984 Reagan badly struggled through his first debate with Walter Mondale, and ended his second with a pointless and senile-sounding reverie about driving along the Pacific Coast Highway in California. But in the view of the press, Reagan "won" the second debate, because when asked about the "age issue" he came back with an affable and effective one-liner about "not exploit[ing] for political purposes my opponent's youth and inexperience." In 1988 the Michael Dukakis campaign never recovered from Dukakis's bloodless-sounding answer to a debate question about whether he would favor the death penalty if his wife were raped and

George W. Bush has thrived in this kind of competition for a deceptively simple reason: he is always on message. Every politician understands that each question at a press conference or a debate should be considered an invitation to make a point of the politician's choosing, no matter what was asked. Doing this gracefully is harder than it sounds. Bush gave a reminder of just how hard in his two widely panned live appearances early this year, on *Meet the Press* in February and in a prime-time televised press conference in April. In neither case did he even go through the motions of politely trying to connect the question that was asked to the on-message theme he had previously decided to stress. As soon as each question began leaving a reporter's lips, you could practically see the President riffling through a mental set of file cards for the next theme he wanted to present.

Yet there are two crucial points to remember about



murdered—even though his running mate, Lloyd Bentsen, torpedoed Dan Quayle in the vice-presidential debate with the now famous remark "I knew Jack Kennedy, Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine ... and Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy." In 1992 the elder George Bush seemed to signal that he had thrown in the towel when he glanced at his watch during the second debate against Bill Clinton. On paper George W. Bush lost the battle of logic to Al Gore in the 2000 debates. But he won the more important "*Saturday Night Live* primary," when Gore was ridiculed for the three different personas he had presented in three debates.

"Debates are not about scoring points," George Lakoff told me, in remarks that were echoed by the Democratic strategist Robert Shrum, the Republican veteran C. Boyden Gray, and everyone else I asked who had experience in presidential campaigns. "They are about emotional identification"—projecting a personality, a bearing, and a world view that voters find appealing.

Bush's recent faltering performances. One is that to voters who *still have an open mind about him*, which is the only audience that matters politically, even a technically clumsy effort to stay on message can succeed in conveying his core values of steadfastness and resolve. The other is that it's wrong to think that Bush is innately clumsy in making rhetorical connections. A senior Republican campaign official, who for obvious reasons would not let me quote him by name, said several days after *Meet the Press* that he was glad the President had been roughed up the way he was: the experience could serve as a wake-up call, early enough in the campaign season for the Bush team to respond to it. He said he hoped it would motivate the kind of preparation that in the past had made Bush artful indeed in steering questions and challenges to his desired subjects.

After seeing the Bush-Richards debate from 1994 Lakoff concluded that it should be used to teach successful debate technique. Within the first few words of each reply

Bush had figured out how to use the question as an opening not simply for his major campaign themes but also for the personal and emotional messages he wanted to project.

Bush's themes in that 1994 campaign were highly predictable. Every time, everywhere, he said he had four ambitions for Texas: to reform the welfare system, to toughen the juvenile-justice system, to improve the public schools, and to end abuses of the tort system. What made the points effective was his presentation of them as reflections of a single emotional message: people had to become more "accountable" for their behavior, good or bad.

With his very first answer in the Richards debate, Bush showed how he would make that connection. The candidates were asked what single issue they considered paramount for Texas and what they would do about it. Richards went first, with a worthy but meandering observation about

"Bush is a very cagey player," says George Shipley, who worked on the Richards campaign. "The eastern liberal press will look down on him, and he'll use that underestimation—he'll use it shrewdly and brilliantly, as he did against Richards and Gore."

the link between good schools and good jobs—and then used the last twenty seconds of her time to remind her audience ("all of us all well dressed and feeling good") to say a prayer for the families in South Texas who were spending that night in shelters because of a hurricane.

"Well spoken, Governor," Bush began, both sounding gracious and disposing of the hurricane-compassion issue in three words. He then moved straight to his main theme: "I think the biggest thing Texas must do is to end the post-Vietnam War syndrome which blames others for society's ills. All policy in Texas must say to each and every individual, You are accountable for your behavior." He then explained what that would mean in welfare, juvenile justice, and the schools, and summed up by saying he wanted to "change a culture that has not held Texans accountable for what they say and what they do."

This was an introduction to how the rest of the evening would go. If the question was about Bush's background (Why have so many of your businesses lost money? Why are you qualified for this job?), Bush would say that this was a distraction from the issues that really concerned Texans. If the question was about anything else, he would say that the solution lay in reforming welfare, juvenile justice, and the schools, with an overarching emphasis on accountability.

In case anyone had missed the point, his closing state-

ment made it clearer still: "I hope people in Texas understand that there are big differences between Governor Richards and me. I am the conservative candidate. She is the liberal candidate ... Won't you join me to make sure that Texas does not look like the rest of the nation but is in fact a beacon state? A state so unique that people look at us and say, That's where I want to live. 'Texas, our Texas, all hail the mighty state.' Thank you, and God bless Texas."

This was the obvious part of Bush's effectiveness. Behind it were two other achievements, less obvious but also important.

One was brilliant management of the "expectations game"—the political world's counterpart to beating the point spread in professional sports. "What was their secret in that debate?" Mary Beth Rogers, an adviser to Ann Richards in her campaign, said when we spoke recently. "It was how they stage-managed the whole process. They constantly set expectations so low against the 'brilliant,' 'silver-tongued' Ann that if he didn't fall on his face in the debate, he 'won.'"

Every external signal sent by the Bush campaign underscored the idea that Richards would romp through the debate. After a consortium of major Texas media outlets agreed to host a debate in Dallas, Bush representatives balked at the idea that half the questions would come from a citizens' panel rather than from reporters. Perhaps they remembered that the first George Bush had done poorly against Bill Clinton in a similar "town hall" debate two years earlier. Perhaps they worried that citizens might ask left-field questions for which George W. Bush was not prepared. The Bush team eventually agreed to the format, but not before reinforcing their underdog image.

As it happened, they had nothing to fear from the citizens, most of whose questions were vague softballs. The two toughest questions for Bush came from veteran journalists. Paul Burka, of *Texas Monthly*, scoffed at Bush's claim that he was a fresh face and an outsider. "You're the son of a President of the United States ... You proudly say that you've never held public office—but you *sought* public office [a congressional seat in 1978] and you got beat. Maybe you're proud of it. I don't know ... isn't it a little disingenuous to portray yourself as an outsider?"

Bush's response was a classic of skillful on-messagism: "I'm not proud of the fact that I got whipped in '78. I *did* come in second in a two-man race"—a slight pause and a purse-lipped smile, in honor of the mild joke, and then the segue—"but here's my point. If you want someone to think the way it's been all along in Austin, then they should not be for me. I am not happy with the welfare system ..." And so on through the familiar list.

The other tough question came from Jim Moore, of KHOU, who asked Bush how he had gotten into the National Guard when so many people were on the waiting list. Bush's answer was different from, and more interesting than, his current line on the subject. Most of them, he said,

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weren't willing to put in the time to become jet pilots. "I wanted to learn how to fly a jet. And I did fly a jet. It took a year and a half's worth of training, something that most people did not want to do." That question did not recur in his Texas debates—but it will this year.

"We never underestimated his abilities, and we worried all along that what did happen would happen," Mary Beth Rogers told me. "They were masters at it. They kept on saying, Ann is so sharp, she is so witty, we don't expect to do well in the debate. They convinced the press and everyone that they were really worried. But in fact he had rehearsed, he had his answers down pat, and he has that remarkable ability to stick to his message and repeat it no matter what. When the debate was over, the fact that he was still standing, that he had presented himself well if not brilliantly, made people think, Well, he's okay!"

This approach was fair warning of the way Bush would handle Al Gore six years later. "Bush is a very cagey player," I was told by George Shipley, who also worked on the Richards campaign. "When he first started to run on the national level, the press stumped him with pop quizzes about the map of Central Europe." According to Shipley, Bush was "happy to play the simpleton and have everybody underestimate him." (He did, however, lack Ronald Reagan's natural ease in that role: when running against Jimmy Carter, in 1980, Reagan was asked to name the current President of Iran, which was then holding Americans hostage. "Well, I

In Bush's worst onstage moment in the 2000 campaign, he managed to sound self-righteous and rattled by McCain's implied slight to his courage. This is a tape the Kerry campaign will want to examine.

don't know his name," Reagan replied with a smile. "But let me tell you, if I become President, he's going to get to know mine.") "The eastern liberal press will look down on him," Shipley said of the upcoming debates, "and he'll use that underestimation—he'll use it shrewdly and brilliantly, as he did against Richards and Gore."

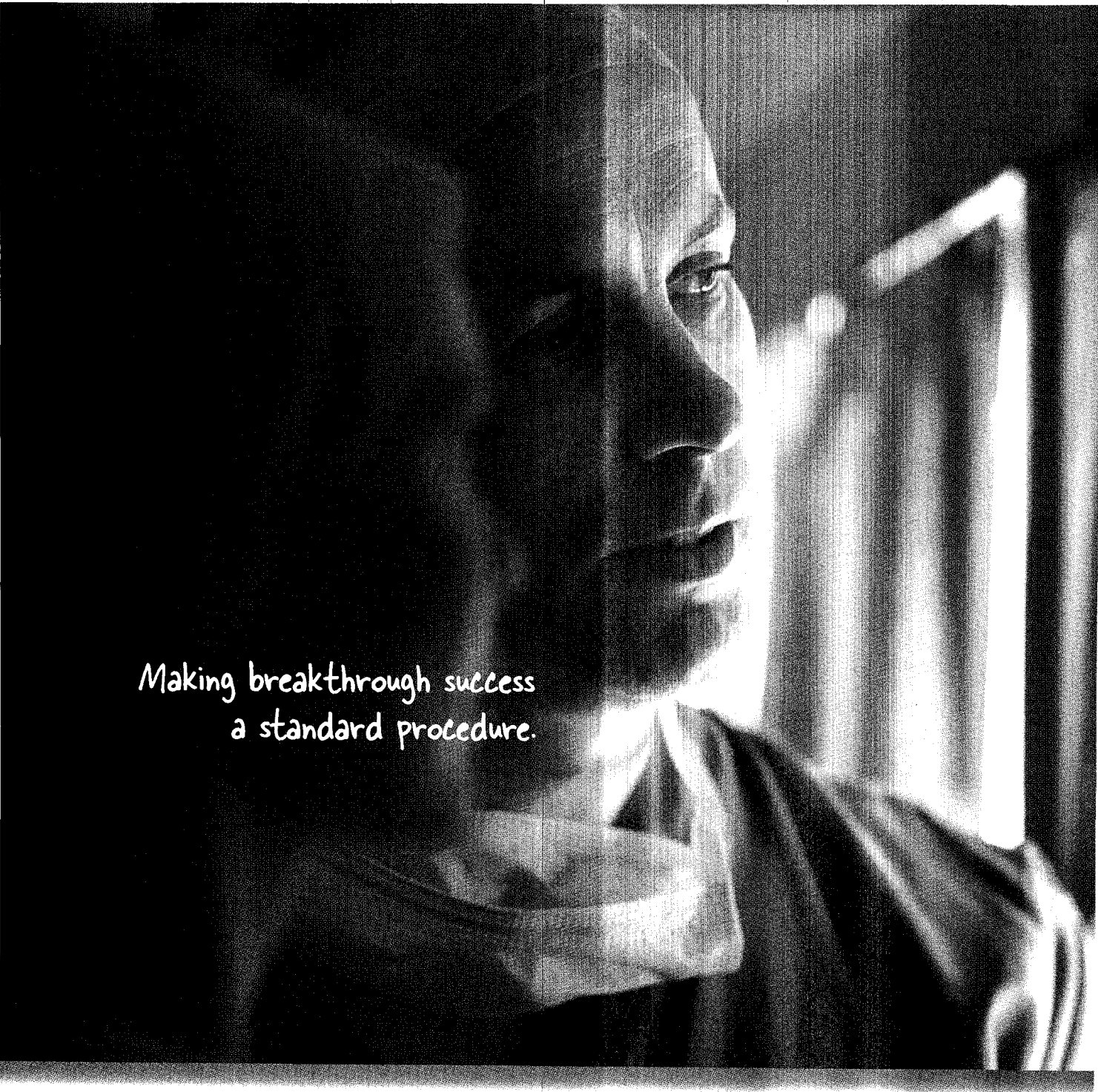
Bush's other achievement, whose effect was magnified by the low expectations, was how extensively he prepared. The connection between preparation and performance has been muddled in recent years by the examples of Bill Clinton and Al Gore. Based on all available evidence, Clinton is the rare orator who doesn't need formal practice to excel. Gore, with his overdeliberate speaking style, managed to give practice a bad name. But in public speaking as in most other pursuits, practice usually makes people better, and rustiness

makes them worse. As President, Bush has steadily improved in his delivery of formal speeches, because he has worked at it. When I asked his Republican associates why he did so poorly on *Meet the Press*, the explanation (always without attribution) was that he had done too few interviews. "I know I'm better on TV shows if I'm in practice, and worse if I'm not," Boyden Gray told me. "The President got out of practice during the Democratic primaries, and he'll certainly get better once he's back in."

There are some skills Bush can use with little or no effort; according to friends, he can quickly size people up and detect their vanities and weak points. Other skills appear to require too much effort for him to bother with. He has rarely been interested in the details of any policy matter, believing that he "has people" who can master the subject for him. But Bush clearly is willing to work hard and observe strict discipline when it matters to him—for instance, in physical conditioning. The evidence is that he approaches campaign preparation with the same iron will.

About Bush's evolution as a speaker there are only a few more things to say. One is that the three years starting with the Bush-Richards debate were a kind of Golden Age of Bush. He was popular in Texas, among Democrats and Republicans alike. The Dick Cheney of that era—the experienced figure widely assumed to be showing the new leader the ropes—was his lieutenant governor, Bob Bullock, a Democrat and the epitome of the split-the-difference, uniter-not-divider school of government. Political Austin is a surprisingly small town; people from both parties run into one another in the grocery store or on the sidewalk, and Bush's retail-level personal charm served him well. "When he became governor, he was finally pleased with himself, in a good way," Paul Burka, who covered Bush through his Texas years, told me. "He felt like somebody who had finally grown up. He emanated power—not so much political power as a personal sense of confidence and ability." Yolette Garcia, who as the executive producer at KERA-TV, in Dallas, had supervised negotiations for the Bush-Richards debate, says that in those days Bush was noted for his poise and ease in public appearances—including the informal Q&As he has tried to avoid as President. "You never saw him in an awkward situation as governor," she told me. "You expected he'd know the right thing to say."

Obviously, Bush doesn't sound this way as President, and there is no one conclusive explanation for the change. I have read and listened to speculations that there must be some organic basis for the President's peculiar mode of speech—a learning disability, a reading problem, dyslexia or some other disorder that makes him so uncomfortable when speaking off the cuff. The main problem with these theories is that through his forties Bush was perfectly articulate. George Lakoff tried to convince me that the change was intentional. As a way of showing deep-down NASCAR-



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type manliness, according to Lakoff, Bush has deliberately made himself sound as clipped and tough as John Wayne. Moreover, in Lakoff's view, the authenticity of this stance depends on Bush's consistency in presenting it. So even if he is still capable of speaking with easy eloquence, he can't afford to let the mask slip.

I say: Maybe. Clearly Bush has been content to let his opponents, including the press, think him a numbskull. Even his unfortunate puzzled-chimp expression when trying to answer questions may be useful: his friends don't mind, and his enemies continue to underestimate him. But to me the more plausible overall explanation is the sheer change in scale from being governor of Texas to being President of the United States.

"It would never have occurred to me (or anyone else who dealt with him at the Capitol) to think of Bush as dumb or lacking gravitas," Paul Burka recently wrote in *Texas Monthly*, about Bush's bright early days as governor. "He was both fluent and knowledgeable about the things a

John Kerry's formal speeches often seem to illustrate the main complaints about his style: that he is pompous-sounding and stiff. His debate tapes make you think, This man knows a lot, he is fast, and he has an interesting mind.

governor needed to know ... He had an unerring instinct for knowing how others really felt about him and how to win them over." In Washington he still has the people skills, but he has given no sign of mastering issues. Thus his stalling, defensive pose when put on the spot.

Burka says that the change began when Bush took seriously a run for the White House. He became more partisan, more formal, more cautious. The results were evident in his second Texas debate, against Garry Mauro. Again the Bush team stonewalled in debate negotiations—this time out of haughtiness, because of Bush's huge lead in the polls. Mauro wanted as many debates as possible; Bush finally agreed to only one. It was on a Friday night in mid-October, head-to-head against high school football games, for minimal statewide viewership. The location was in El Paso, so remote from the rest of the state it is in a different time zone, and with a heavily Hispanic, Democratic electorate. Bush thought that if he could become the first Republican in memory to carry El Paso—as he ultimately did—he might demonstrate the potential breadth of his nationwide appeal.

As a result, Mauro and the entire debate were essentially props for a Bush campaign blitz in West Texas. The debate

was held in a tiny basement room on the campus of the University of Texas at El Paso. The candidates' families and a few local officials sat on metal folding chairs in the room; everyone else, including reporters, watched TV monitors elsewhere. Laura Bush sat a few feet away from Mauro's children, whom she knew but (according to Mauro) did not speak to or acknowledge. According to the rules of this debate, insisted on by Bush's team, the screen had to show only whichever candidate was speaking—that is, no cut-away or reaction shots were allowed.

Therefore no one outside the room saw the miniature drama inside. Bush was halfway toward his presidential style, speaking more slowly and less gracefully than four years earlier, and with a more dismissive air toward his opponent. While Mauro was speaking, Bush would sigh, grimace, and send body-language messages of boredom or contempt. "It was incredible," Mauro told me recently. "I almost can't believe it in retelling it. Because the press was upstairs, they didn't realize how aggressive he was on the stage—pulling the sleeve of the moderator, staring or winking at Laura in the crowd." The moderator of the debate, Bob Moore, of the *El Paso Times*, told me that Bush actually grabbed him just before the debate: "In the hallway, Bush did grab me by the lapels, pull me close to his face, and say, 'Bobby, you clean up real good.' Typical Bush." When Bush was on stage but off camera, Moore said, "there was that Bush smirk, rolling his eyes, all of which Bush is very good at."

During Bush's run for President his debates were notable mainly for the way Al Gore destroyed himself. Bush, after his campaign had relentlessly downplayed expectations, was serviceably on message in his three appearances with Gore. But Gore was too histrionic in the first (the "sighing" debate), too gentle and drugged-seeming in the second, and too late in finding the proper calmly aggressive tone in the third.

Bush did have one difficult moment in the 2000 debates. It came neither during the cattle calls of the early primary season, in which he had to compete for airtime with the likes of Gary Bauer and Steve Forbes, nor during the general-election debates against Gore, in which Bush stuck with his mistake-avoidance strategy while Gore flopped from tone to tone. Rather, it came before the bitterly contested and decisive South Carolina primary.

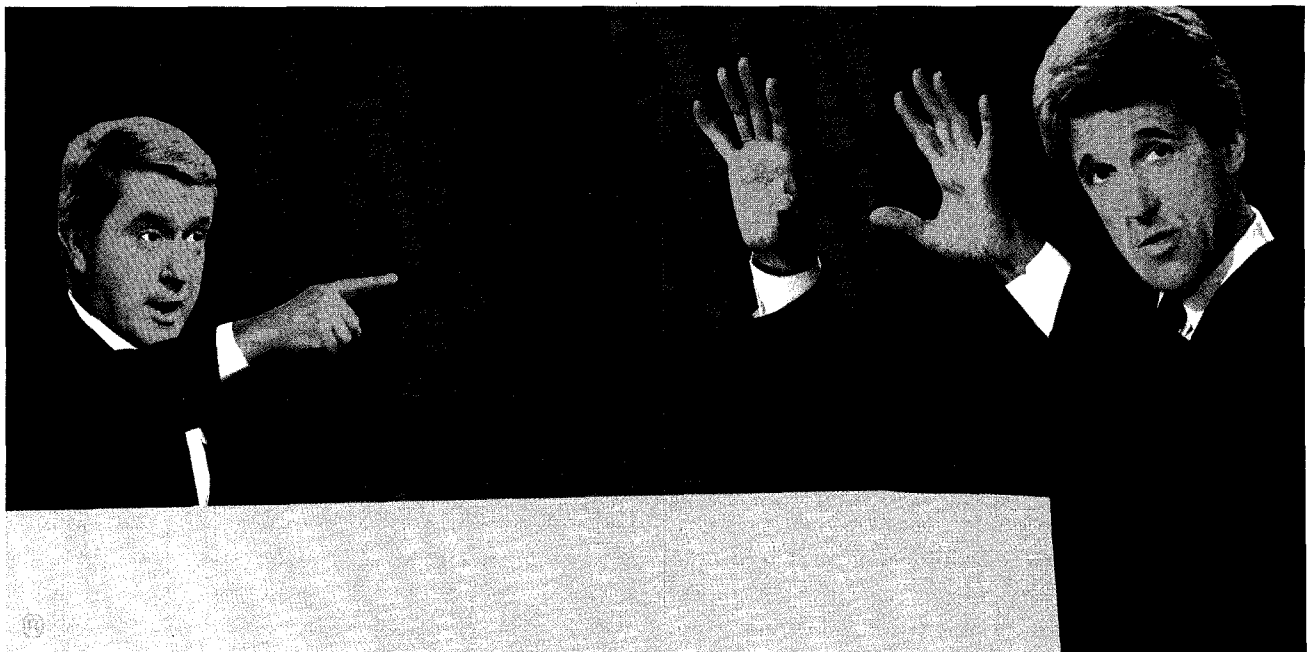
On February 15, four days before the vote, Bush and McCain appeared together on *Larry King Live* (along with Alan Keyes, the motormouth former ambassador, who was still in the race). Beneath a smile, McCain was seething. Two weeks earlier he had pulled off a surprising victory over the much better financed Bush in New Hampshire. Bush had responded in South Carolina by attacking McCain mercilessly from the right. On *Larry King*, Bush and McCain traded complaints about unfair negative campaign ads. Bush's complaint was that McCain had run an ad comparing him to Bill Clinton. "That's about as low a blow as you can give in a Republican primary!" he said.

McCain held a tight smile. "Let me tell you what really went over the line," he said shortly afterward, when asked by King for a reply. At a recent Bush rally Bush had stood alongside someone McCain called "a spokesman for a fringe veterans' group," who had denounced McCain for "abandoning" Vietnam veterans.

With feigned politeness, McCain told Bush, "I don't know if you can understand this, George, but that really hurts. It really hurts." No mention of McCain's service as a military pilot, nor of his imprisonment and torture in the "Hanoi Hilton"; everyone knew what McCain meant. McCain turned to King. "And so five United States senators—Vietnam veterans, heroes, some of them really incredible heroes—wrote George a letter and said, 'Apologize.' You should be ashamed."

Bush sputtered, "Let me speak to that ..."

John Kerry's speaking style has a much longer video record than Bush's. This record, too, is startling, but for the opposite reason: throughout his public life John Kerry has sounded the same. As a long-haired twenty-seven-year-old Vietnam vet, Kerry appeared on *Meet the Press* in 1971 to explain his opposition to the war. On *Meet the Press* this spring, footage from that old segment was intercut with live comments from the sixty-year-old Kerry. If you didn't look at the screen, you couldn't be sure which Kerry was speaking. During his run for re-election to the Senate eight years ago, Kerry met the Republican governor of Massachusetts, William Weld, in a celebrated series of eight debates. The man who appears on those tapes has darker, more helmetlike hair than today's Democratic nominee, but otherwise his moves are just the same as the ones Kerry used against his rivals Dean,



McCain faced him again, calm but contemptuous: "You should be ashamed."

It went on for minutes. Bush protested McCain's underhanded tricks—why, one of McCain's supporters, the former senator Warren Rudman, had said that the Christian Coalition included "bigots." Of McCain's military heroism Bush lamely said, "I'm proud of your record, just like you are," and conceded—in an "okay, are you happy now?" tone—that McCain had "served his country well" and had not abandoned veterans. But he was still unhappy himself: "You can disagree with me on issues, John, but do not question—do not question my trustworthiness, and do *not* compare me to Bill Clinton." It was Bush's worst onstage moment in the 2000 campaign. He managed to sound both self-righteous and rattled by McCain's direct challenge to his tactics and implied slight to his courage. This is a tape the Kerry campaign will want to examine—while remembering that Bush went on to beat McCain in South Carolina.

Cephardt, and Edwards in the Democratic-primary debates.

Sitting through the videos of Kerry's old debates and interviews produced an effect I hadn't remotely anticipated: I was sorry when they were finished, because it was a treat to see this man perform. With Bush, I developed new respect for the power of his determination to stick to his main point. But this is not something you want to watch. Kerry under pressure was engrossing in a way that reminded me of a climactic courtroom scene in a Scott Turow novel, in which a skillful prosecutor eventually traps an evasive witness. You could see him maneuvering, thinking, adjusting, attacking, applying both knowledge and logic, and generally coming out ahead. John Kerry's formal speeches often seem to illustrate the main complaints about his style: that he is pompous-sounding and stiff. But these debates mainly make you think, This man knows a lot, he is fast, and he has an interesting mind. Kerry was usually effective without being ugly or unfair. Kerry's lightness of touch, compared

with Bush's relentless plodding, is a surprise considering what we all know about their backgrounds: Bush never thought of becoming President until a few years before he did; Kerry thought of it in prep school.

The contrast in speaking styles is complete on nearly every axis, and it illustrates the larger contrasts of character and background that these men bring to this race. Bush is best when prepared and worst when surprised; Kerry is best when forced to react and worst when given too much time. Bush is best when insisting on his two or three main points, Kerry when recognizing the nuances of any particular issue. Two different concepts of leadership, in addition to two political views, are at stake in the campaign—and the clash of personalities will be more interesting than the differences over policy in the debates.

The contrast in speaking styles illustrates the larger contrasts of character that these men bring to this race. Bush is best when prepared and worst when surprised; Kerry is best when forced to react and worst when given too much time.

John Kerry decided early in life to develop his speaking skills, and he reached a more or less mature proficiency by his early twenties. In prep school, at St. Paul's, he took a course that analyzed classic debates from history, and was a successful member of the debate team. "He has always been a very studied person when it comes to his public speaking," Daniel Barbiero, who was a St. Paul's classmate of Kerry's and roomed with him at Yale, told me. (A total of eighteen St. Paul's graduates were in that same Yale class.) At Yale, Kerry took a course in the history of American oratory, taught by the history professor and debate-team coach Rollin "Rollie" Osterweis. "John loved the class," Barbiero said, "and would come back to the room and read to us so-and-so's great speech from the 1800s." Osterweis frequently said before Kerry's graduation that he was one of the greatest debaters ever to come from Yale.

In the summer of 1963, after his first year in college, Kerry traveled to Europe with another of his roommates, Harvey Bundy. "He had a lot of things he wanted to do in London," Bundy told me, "but the thing he wanted to do more than anything else was to talk at Speaker's Corner, in Hyde Park." Kerry stood on a wooden crate and began speaking. "I wasn't really that interested," Bundy said. "I mean, I heard him every day. I think it was a defense of U.S. policy, and it was very passionate. But what amazed me was that maybe ten people gathered around to hear him." Ac-

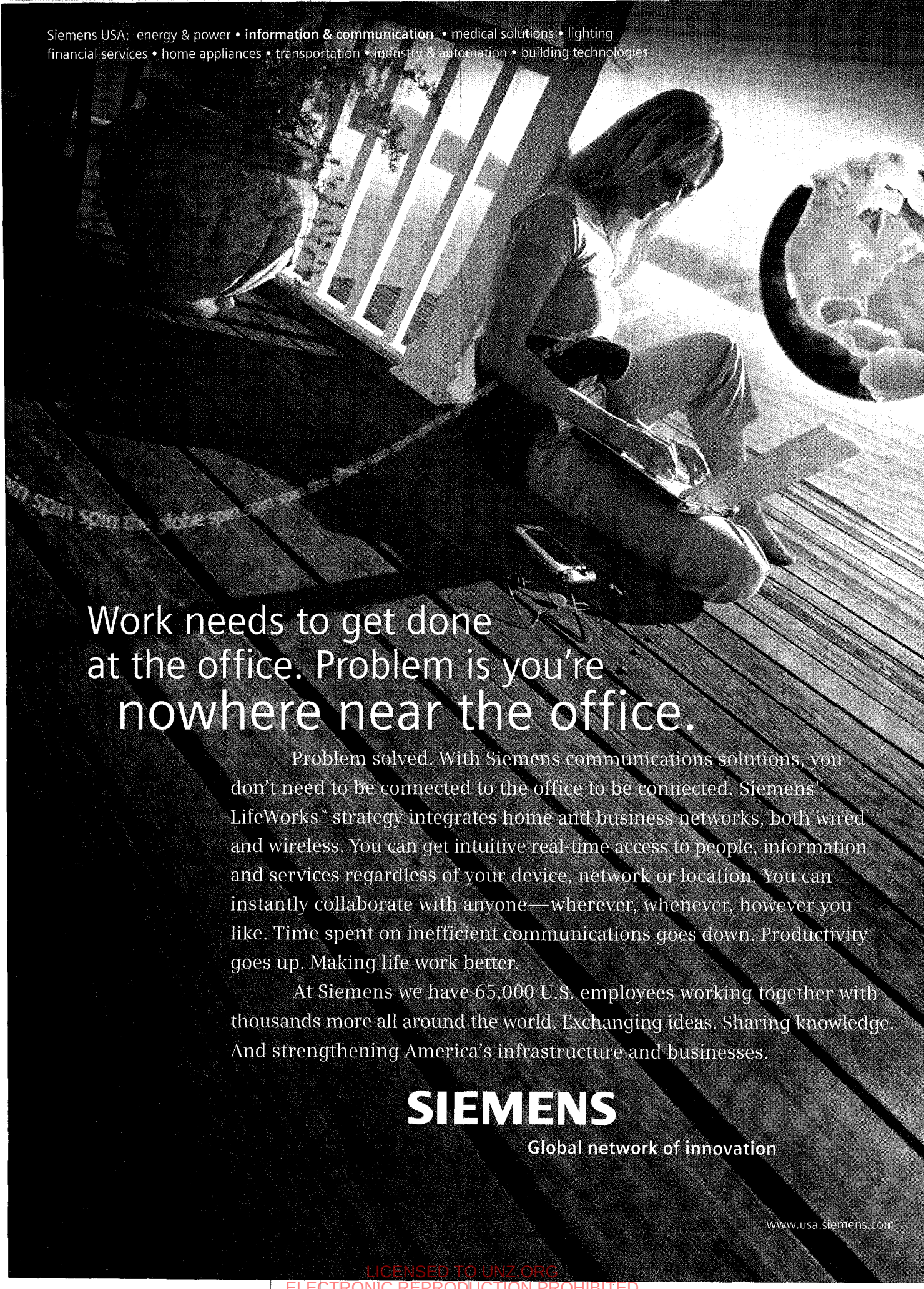
cording to an article in the *Yale Daily News*, Kerry was on the winning team in dozens of debates while in college, including one against a much feared and previously unbeaten team from England. In his senior year Kerry was expected to win the competition to be class orator, and he did.

I asked Bundy, Barbiero, and another Yale friend, David Thorne, whether Kerry's early speaking success seemed to be more a matter of talent or of effort. They all said both. "John was always writing things out on legal pads and practicing them," Bundy told me. "At Hyde Park he was speaking completely without notes, but the speech was probably one he had given at Yale." Thorne said, "Since I've known him, he's always been good at speaking—and he has always worked at being good. He would write out the speech, and we'd listen to it, and he would change it and practice it some more." Kerry's determination to practice was no doubt intensified by his one great failure as a college speaker. In his junior year he was competing for the Yale speaking prize, which required delivering an oration from memory. Kerry worked on his speech and gave it repeatedly to his roommates. But when he took the stage, he froze. "He had known it absolutely cold, but he couldn't get it back," Bundy told me. "It probably hasn't happened to him since, but it certainly did that day."

David Thorne, often described as Kerry's best friend, presents this determination as a matter of basic temperament. Thorne, who is from a wealthy New York family, was with Kerry in *Skull and Bones* and also in the Navy in Vietnam. His sister, Julia, was Kerry's first wife. "When he is in a fight, he rises to the moment like nobody else I've seen," Thorne told me. "He has a great instinct for figuring out, under pressure, what is necessary to survive. The downside is, when he's not under pressure he can sometimes wander around. It's kind of a deadline syndrome he struggles with." Thorne went on to connect this to combat experience in Vietnam, but it also fits Kerry's performance as a presidential candidate: lackluster as the early Democratic front-runner, and then intense in fighting his way back.

In 1996 Kerry faced his only tough race for re-election, against William Weld. In some ways Weld and Kerry were absurdly similar. Both were aristocratic-sounding, though only Weld came from a rich family. They were the same imposing height and nearly the same age. They had grown up eyeing each other as rivals in Massachusetts politics, and their showdown had the jocular, insider quality of a Harvard-Yale football game. "I brought silver golf markers to one of our debates—an H and a Y," Weld told me when I visited him recently at his offices in New York, where he is an investment consultant. Kerry was Mr. Yale of his era; Weld's family is so closely connected to Harvard that a dorm, a boathouse, and an endowed chair are named Weld. "I handed him the Y and held on to the H, and I said, 'Let's go play a round when this is all done.'" Both men were very sure of their ability to think on their feet.

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But they differed in a crucial way. Kerry tried harder. His tone was more appropriate to a TV debate (Kerry was understated and almost languid, Weld strangely blustering). He was quicker to turn each answer into an attack. And he more clearly figured out the theme that would be troublesome for his opponent, as he hammered home the idea that Weld was a comrade of Newt Gingrich and the national Republican Party—a kiss of death in Massachusetts. (Perhaps illustrating the truism that aristocrats don't sweat off the squash court, on the day of the first debate Weld was worrying about a chess match against a journalist. "I would advise the President not to engage in any chess games by mail while engaged in debates with Senator Kerry," Weld told me. "I was studying the chess game in my office and also preparing for the debate that night—and I made just a little bit of a mistake and lost a pawn. And I really hated losing that pawn.")

GIFT

*All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;
and we all do fade as a leaf* —ISAIAH 64:6

After my mother's father died,
she gave me his morocco Bible.
I took it from her hand, and saw
the gold was worn away, the binding
scuffed and ragged, split below the spine,
and inside, smudges where her father's
right hand gripped the bottom corner
page by page, an old man waiting, not quite
reading the words he had known by heart
for sixty years: our parents in the garden,
naked, free from shame; the bitterness of labor;
blood in the ground, still calling for God's
curse. His thumbprints faded after the flood,
to darken again where God bids Moses smite
the rock, and then again in Psalms, in Matthew
every page. And where Paul speaks of things
God hath prepared, things promised them who wait,
things not yet entered into the loving heart,
below the margin of the verse, the paper
is translucent with the oil and dark
still with the dirt of his right hand.

—BROOKS HAXTON

Brooks Haxton is the author of several books of poems and verse translations, including Fragments: The Collected Wisdom of Heraclitus (2001) and Uproar: Antiphonies to Psalms (2004).

Weld's distraction may have allowed Kerry to get off perhaps his most memorable line that night. Weld named the mother of a policeman killed in the line of duty, and challenged Kerry to tell her why he opposed the death penalty for cop-killers. "I know something about killing," Kerry began, confident that everyone in Massachusetts remembered that Weld had sat out the Vietnam War with a bad back. He went on to present the argument he had prepared on this point: that such people were "scum" who should be thrown into jail for the rest of their lives, but that he didn't think the state honored life by sanctioning killing. According to Robert Shrum, a longtime confidant who was Kerry's "message adviser" in the Senate race and who plays the same role in his presidential campaign, the "I know something" line was spontaneous. "He was good on the specifics and the 'meta' message," Shrum told me. For instance, in a later debate Kerry and Weld were in a detailed tussle over their respective proposals for Social Security. Finally Kerry said, "Senator Kennedy and I see this the same way"—which was what the Massachusetts audience needed to hear.

"He is an acrobat," Weld told me, summing up Kerry's performance in the debates. "He is well informed, and he's not easily stampeded. And he is very, very quick. Don't think for a moment that he and I did not throw eighty-five surprise kitchen sinks at each other in the course of eight debates. And I don't recall him ever getting flustered or ever being seriously thrown off his pins." Kerry's performance is remarkably consistent—question by question, debate by debate, year by year. Few dramatic highs, but even fewer embarrassing lows.

"I've wondered in the past whether, outside New England, Senator Kerry's voice would strike people as too aristocratic in tone or choice of words," Weld said. "I wondered whether because of that he was ever going to travel in the South or the Bible Belt. But certainly in the Democratic primaries that issue seemed to be behind him. If anything, he came across as the tough guy. Good tough, not bad tough."

Weld's question gets to the heart of the challenge for John Kerry in these debates—indeed, in the campaign as a whole. That is, the challenge of making people like him. George W. Bush has barely even tried to convince voters that he is the master of details or policy. But he has consistently and effectively conveyed two more-basic themes: that he will be strong—or "resolute," as he often puts it—in defending the nation; and that he is a likeable man. Few find him as likeable as, say, Ronald Reagan; and a significant fraction of the public does not like him one bit. But enough Americans like him sufficiently to have kept his job-approval ratings high throughout his Administration, despite obvious problems with the economy and in Iraq.

John Kerry will leave no one wondering whether he is in command of details and policy. Sitting through his debate tapes was like watching a multi-day champion knock off

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challengers on *Jeopardy*. However obscure the topic, he had a policy—and a criticism of his opponent's. But Democrats are well aware that although expertise was part of Bill Clinton's appeal, it is not enough by itself. It didn't save Jimmy Carter against Ronald Reagan, or Michael Dukakis against the first George Bush, or Al Gore against the second. And it won't do the job for Kerry without some combination of strength and likeability.

I was surprised to find that the more I saw of Kerry in action, the better I thought of him on both counts. He has pushed his Vietnam record so hard for so long that many people are tired of hearing about his courage and readiness for conflict. But the warrior persona that comes through in his debates is appealing. He is not a happy warrior in the political sense, like Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, or John Edwards. Instead, as the vanquished William Weld put it, he is "good tough." In his words and arguments Kerry is always attacking and moving forward, but in demeanor he is unruffled—like a confident detective or prosecutor relentlessly building his case.

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As for likeability, there is no disguising this problem for Kerry. American aristocrats come in a wide variety of political personalities: those so cool they inspire envy (John F. Kennedy); those whose raucous enjoyment of upper-class privilege has a kind of mainstream appeal (Teddy Roosevelt, William Weld); those with an august, patrician duty to serve (the Taft and Stevenson dynasties); those who reinvent themselves as average Joes (the first George Bush, with his pork rinds; the current President Bush, with a Texas twang shared by none of his siblings).

By family background, John Kerry is less an aristocrat than many of these people. Despite some Winthrop lineage, he is seen as upper-class mainly for two reasons: because he sounds that way, and because both his wives have been very rich. His fancy educational pedigree—St. Paul's, Yale, Skull and Bones—was more a way of entering elite levels than a reflection of his having started there, like Weld or Bush. Unlike the Bushes, who reinvented themselves as normal Americans, Kerry reinvented himself as an American aristocrat, with the cool bearing that comes with the role. He will never be a warm character. But I liked him

better after seeing his controlled, intent mastery of the virtual combat of debate.

These things are known about the 2004 debates:

There will be at most four of them—three presidential, one vice-presidential. Often incumbents insist on even fewer, and four years ago the Bush team waited until Labor Day before accepting terms for any at all. A bipartisan Commission on Presidential Debates sets the ground rules, but it has no enforcement power and must negotiate with parties and candidates in each election cycle. This time the commission tried to outflank everyone by announcing dates and sites last fall, and putting the sites in swing states: Florida, Ohio, Missouri, and Arizona. Neither campaign wants to be the one blamed by the people of, say, St. Louis for canceling a debate they had been counting on.

The campaigns will wrangle over rules nearly until the first debate, which is scheduled for September 30 in Miami. In the negotiations for past debates some candidate has always vetoed the idea of a "Lincoln-Douglas" exchange, in which candidates directly question each other. The commission has several times persuaded candidates to accept a single-moderator format, rather than a panel of questioners—a vast improvement from the public's point of view, because the moderator doesn't have to worry about competing against his colleagues for airtime and can concentrate more fully on what the candidates are saying. A moderator with the right touch can back away and let the candidates address each other directly as the discussion evolves. The Bush team will ask for debates limited to specific topics—foreign policy, the economy. The Kerry team will ask for, but not get, open-ended sessions in which any subject can be raised. The Bush team will look for staging to conceal the fact that the President is so much shorter than Kerry: they may ask for a seated debate, or they may build a small "pitcher's mound" behind the President's podium, like the one built for Michael Dukakis in 1988, to put his head on a level with his opponent's.

This summer the candidates will go to "debate camp," with surrogate adversaries. Most Democrats I spoke with said that Kerry should practice against John Edwards. William Weld told me that the Bush team should choose as a surrogate Kerry "somebody who's awfully fast on their feet—Phil Gramm, Newt Gingrich." George Bush will try in his every answer to convey "I am a wartime President, and I am strong." John Kerry will try to convey "You don't know what you are doing, and you are weak."

But other things are not known: Whether one of the men, under pressure, will reveal something about his character he did not intend to reveal. Whether John Kerry will try to challenge Bush directly on the one issue shown to disconcert him: the contrast in their war records. And whether there is anything the challenger can do to offset the incumbent's advantage. ▀



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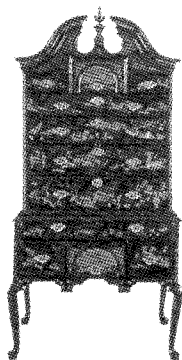
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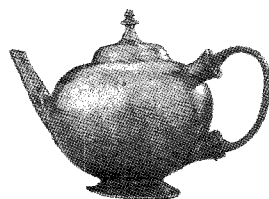
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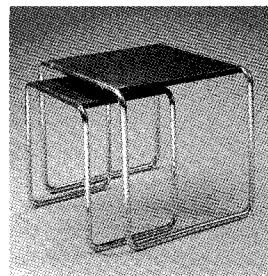
Col. Josiah Quincy loved this ca. 1735 japanned high chest of drawers, which was saved from house fires not once, but twice. It is one of the few still in existence.



Edward Burne-Jones's affection for Harvard professor Charles Eliot Norton resulted in his painting this portrait of Norton's daughter as a gift to him in 1884.



Crispus Attucks, a man of African and Native American descent who was the first to die in the Boston Massacre, owned this gnarled 1750s teapot, which was later preserved as a relic of patriotism.



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DUMB AND DUMBER

Why are campaign commercials so bad?

BY JOSHUA GREEN

Illustration by Barry Blitt

.....

This year, once again, a huge number of Americans will experience their most tangible encounter with politics not at a campaign rally, debate, or meetup, or even on the evening news, but by being subjected to a televised political advertisement. And then, very likely, another and another and another ...

Election seasons flood the airwaves with ads. By a wide margin, campaigns are now spending more on advertising than on anything else, and with each cycle the amount they spend grows dramatically. The Campaign Media Analysis Group, a private firm that tracks televised political ads, counted a total of 1,497,386 spots aired in the nation's top 100 markets in 2002. And that year, even without a presidential election, the cost for the first time exceeded \$1 billion. In the Boston market one station alone, WMUR, broadcast 17,328 ads. This year those numbers will easily be eclipsed.

Being on the receiving end of all this can feel more like punishment than politics: not only do these ads arrive at an unrelenting pace, but they are nearly indistinguishable from one another. Every year, like clockwork, the same shopworn phrases are intoned against a flow of stock footage in identical, shoddily produced attacks ("My opponent *says* he's against terrorism—so why did he cut funding for our troops?") and counterattacks ("We need progress, not divisive attacks"), all narrated with the same portent-of-doom voice-over implying that a miscast vote for first selectman could imperil the republic. Most people would agree that televised political ads, almost without exception, are remorselessly bad.

This is remarkable for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that commercials for consumer products actually tend to be quite good, and the TV-viewing public is exceptionally savvy about advertising. Consumer ads regularly warrant their own prime-time TV specials, and have become such a staple of our popular culture that Super Bowl hype now derives as much from the debuts of high-profile ad cam-

paigns as from the game itself. So it's strange that the commercials that seek to influence the most important "brand choice" any of us can make—for the leader of the free world—so consistently lag in quality and imagination behind those intended to influence our choice of light beer.

From his Pittsburgh office in the stylishly renovated headquarters of what was once the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad, the Republican media consultant John Brabender struggles against this sort of mediocrity. Brabender, forty-seven, is a floppy-haired man distinguishable from his fellow Pittsburghers only by his adman's black suit. He is as kinetic and subversively funny as his product. Just inside the door of BrabenderCox visitors are greeted by what appears to be an authentic electric chair, complete with restraining straps—a prop from a recent spot. It sits below a faux movie poster with a mock critic's endorsement for the firm: "You'll laugh! You'll cry! You'll get elected!"

When I paid him a visit in April, Brabender ushered me into his studio and joined his creative director, Ron Dylewski, in a tutorial on what makes a successful political ad. It required little in the way of explanation. On a giant-screen television Brabender first played "Waste," which he created for Rick Santorum's successful 1994 challenge to Senator Harris Wofford, of Pennsylvania. It opens with a hand daintily snipping a sliver of paper with red kiddie scissors. "This is how serious Harris Wofford is about cutting government waste," begins a gentle voice, over the lilt of chamber music. Cut to another pair of hands as a chain saw tears through an enormous stack of paper. The voice becomes a bellow fit for a monster-truck-show announcer: "*And this is how serious Rick Santorum is! In the last term of Congress he introduced more original bills cutting government waste than anyone else! Join the fight!*"—a boxing glove smashes through the screen—"Santorum for Senate!" Memorable and funny, the whole ad lasts just fifteen seconds.

Joshua Green is a senior editor of The Atlantic and a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly.

Brabender then played "Ski Patrol," which was created with the Bush campaign in mind but never had a chance to air. It begins with a shot of blue sky and pristine alps. "Howard Dean was granted a deferment from the military after showing up at a recruitment office with an x-ray indicating he had a bad back," the voice-of-God narrator says. Suddenly a skier shoots off a snowy precipice and slaloms expertly down the mountain. "That very same year, Dean went on to ski eighty times—eighty—helping him to become an expert skier and the perfect commander in chief ... if we ever go to war against Switzerland." Brabender played more ads, none of which looked anything like the ones most people are accustomed to seeing. "Garden State Strikes Back," from the 2002 New Jersey Senate race, was a faithful and clever knockoff of the *Star Wars* sequel, in which the "USS *Forrester*" attacks and destroys the Death Star-like "*Torricelli*." The ad is entirely computer-animated, and on a par with any popular video game.

In 2002 one political-consulting firm, Politically-e, dispensed with any illusion of originality and offered pre-taped political commercials that campaigns could buy and tailor to the candidate, like off-the-rack suits.

"There's a stifling sameness to what we do," Brabender laments. Unlike consumer-ad makers, political campaigns are inherently cautious. Brabender faults the consultant culture that has infected modern campaigning, wherein pollsters, campaign managers, and very often the candidates themselves demand to have creative input. "Everybody wants to play Siskel and Ebert," he told me. "Candidates ride around all day coming up with ads in their heads." He cited the tale of the former New York senator Alfonse D'Amato's last stand: "D'Amato once said to me, 'Where's my line-item-veto ad?' I said, 'What do you mean?' He said, 'Don't you understand? People all over this country are sitting at their dinner tables at night wondering why we don't have a line-item veto.'" Even now Brabender looked incredulous.

Design by committee, Brabender says, stifles creativity and produces lousy ads. Less is often more in a visual medium like television, but many pollsters and campaign managers seem blind to that: they try to cram as many issues into an ad as they can. If someone throws five tennis balls at you, he points out, it's tough to catch any of them. But with a single ball it's easy. The effectiveness of ads like "Ski Patrol" lies in their simplicity.

Such quality is the exception. More often, Brabender says, the creative process goes something like this: "Say a candidate is vulnerable on Social Security and needs an ad to turn things around. The pollster will say, 'You must say these four things: We're not going to change the rules, we're not going to raise taxes,' and so on. So every candidate is basically saying the same four poll-tested things." No wonder viewers can pretty much recite them in advance.

Ad makers have developed a kind of visual shorthand to communicate with viewers at a level of minimal consciousness. "When you want to signify that your candidate is good on jobs," Brabender says, "you shoot him in a hard hat, pointing at a steel beam. That's the universal code for 'jobs.' When you want to reach seniors, you shoot him in a nursing home, smiling gently at older folks." To link him with education, multiracial kindergartners are the norm (teenagers might look surly); for Middle American wholesomeness rolling fields of wheat are reliable; and especially since 9/11, the universal signifier for strength and patriotism has been "flags, flags, flags." In 2002 one political-consulting firm, Politically-e, dispensed with any illusion of originality and offered pre-taped political commercials that campaigns could buy and tailor to the candidate, like off-the-rack suits. "It's a lot like fast food," Brabender says. "It's cooked up and served the same way every time, and it leaves you unsatisfied and probably with a bit of indigestion."

In 1975 a cut-rate electronics chain in New York launched what would become a legendary ad campaign. The low-budget spots featured a frenetic pitchman dressed in outrageous costumes who always signed off by waving his arms and shrieking, "Crazy Eddie's prices are insa-a-a-ane!" The ads aired mainly in the dead of night, but Crazy Eddie took off nevertheless. Today it is hard to find any decent-sized American city that does not have at least one local retailer whose commercials feature a zany pitchman hawking mattresses, used cars, or furniture.

A similar dynamic has shaped political advertising. Last year William Benoit, a professor of communications at the University of Missouri, published a paper in the journal *Advertising & Society* in which he traced the emergence of the major themes in political advertising. After enduring some 2,027 presidential-campaign spots dating back to their earliest use, in the 1952 race, Benoit established that most of the formats used by today's campaigns originated in the 1950s. Even the snide tone that is now de rigueur dates back decades. A 1968 Hubert Humphrey ad titled "Weathervane" is a fine example. "Ever noticed what happens to Nixon when the political winds blow?" asks the narrator, as a weathervane in Nixon's image (with elongated nose) spins wildly in the breeze. "Which way will he blow next?" Switch "Nixon" to "Kerry" and the ad could easily feature in the current campaign.



In these early ads Benoit also discovered many other familiar techniques, including the biographical ad, the negative attack, and the practice of using an opponent's words against him. "Most of these are time-honored formats," he told me recently. "There hasn't been much innovation." Indeed, political ads have remained strikingly similar since the 1950s, even as consumer ads have evolved dramatically. The difference seems to be that consumer advertisers prize originality, whereas political advertisers prize conformity. In that regard political ads function as a microcosm of politics generally—characterized by frequent and dramatic hyperbole, but resistant to all but the most incremental change.

Scholars have devoted considerable attention to this subject, and from their work one can piece together a sci-

entific rationale for why most ads are so lame. Benoit's own research is a good place to start. Several years ago he posited a "functional theory of political campaign discourse," which argues that a candidate can do only three things to make himself look better in voters' eyes: praise himself, attack his opponent, or defend himself from attack.

In *Seeing Spots: A Functional Analysis of Presidential Television Advertisements, 1952–1996* (1999), Benoit provided statistical evidence supporting Brabender's complaint that pollsters confuse viewers by jamming more and more issues into political ads. Benoit found that from 1952 to 1996 the average number of issues covered in Republican ads rose by 115 percent, and in Democratic ads by a kamikaze 519 percent.

Roderick P. Hart, a professor at the University of Texas, has documented what seems to be a competing trend over roughly the same period. Even as they were including more issues, political ads were using fewer words. Hart found that the average number of words per spot had decreased from 210 in the 1960 election to just eighty-six in the 1996 election. He also discovered—no surprise here—that the incidence of negative advertising had grown from around 11 percent to 43 percent in those years. In other words, over time political ads have become more confusing, shorter, and more malevolent.

In possibly the most negative race of the most recent election cycle, for property-value assessor in a Kentucky county, an ad by the incumbent stated that her opponent had been arrested or charged fifty-six times for infractions that included drunken driving, felony assault, and terroristic threatening. "In a drunken brawl," the ad's narrator declared, the opponent "bit a man's ear completely off." The challenger responded in kind, with an ad accusing the assessor of appearing in a pornographic video.

This type of negativity is one of the most frequent complaints about political advertising—a criticism campaign professionals privately dismiss. There is ample scientific evidence that, despite widespread public distaste for them, negative ads are the most effective kind, because people are

more apt to remember negative information than positive information. Television ads are a particularly cherished vehicle for disseminating such information. As Lynda Lee Kaid, a telecommunications professor at the University of Florida, explains, people tend to expose themselves only to information they agree with, but because political ads fill the airwaves, it's almost impossible to shut them out completely. "The research tends to show that people often are persuaded," she says, "even without cognitively or openly choosing to be."

There's another reason campaigns are so quick to employ, and often abuse, negative ads. Unlike Bud Light, which seeks to maximize its public appeal, political campaigns can afford to alienate the more sensitive members of the electorate and are perfectly happy to drive down turnout—as long as they win votes from a plurality of those who do show up. In fact, one reason campaigns bother running positive ads when a race turns nasty is to ensure that their negative ads remain effective. This is known in the trade as "running a positive and a negative track." Craig Varoga, a Democratic consultant, says, "If people feel somewhat good about you, they're more likely to believe the accusations you make against the other side." No surprise, then, that campaigns are willing to go for blood.

Kaid has charted this phenomenon among female candidates. In the early 1990s, when women began running for office in greater numbers, their campaigns rarely went negative. Sometime around the middle of the decade, that changed. "Women realized they couldn't be demure and genteel and expect to win," Kaid says. "So they adopted the same style and strategies as men." Today research shows that women actually use negative campaign ads more than men do.

But not even the rewards of going negative account for the preponderance of lousy ads. If it seems like you're seeing more of them than ever, that's because you are—many more. Media consultants measure the amount of voter exposure to ads in something called "gross ratings points." One hundred gross ratings points means that on average 100 percent of the people watching television will have seen an ad once. Twenty years ago the standard "buy" for a political ad was 400 gross ratings points, meaning that on average people would see it four times. "Today," Varoga says, "the rule of thumb is that you need to do a thousand points a week—more when you're in the heat of the campaign."

The reason is that political advertising is becoming less effective. In 1972 a General Electric study of televised advertisements found that the average person had to view an ad three times for it to sink in. This number is known as the "effective frequency." Over the years, as cable television and the Internet have flourished, viewers have become more difficult to reach, and advertisers now have a harder time getting them to remember ads. The effective frequency for consumer ads is now around five or six viewings. But polit-

ical ads are even harder to remember—presumably because of their poor quality. Their effective frequency can run as high as twenty viewings. "That's forcing us to run a thousand, fifteen hundred, even as high as two thousand gross ratings points behind a single spot," Brabender says. Rather than come up with ads that are more memorable—more like consumer ads—campaigns have decided to pound viewers into distracted submission with the same mediocre product.

After an election somebody is out of work. When we met over lunch, Brabender realized that these all-or-nothing stakes would offer a vivid way to illustrate the difference between consumer and political ad campaigns. "Can you imagine if there was going to be a vote in November and there would only be one light beer?" he mused, seeming to relish the prospect. We considered how the conventions of negative campaigning might apply. (*"There they go again. Flip-flopping Miller Lite says it's 'less filling' and that it 'tastes great.' So which one is it? We're Bud Light, and we approved this message."*)

The conventions of commercial advertising, on the other hand, could do a great deal to improve political ads and brake the slide into bludgeoning repetition. This is the triumph of Brabender's work: it brings the humor and irony of a beer commercial to the overmanaged world of political campaigns. Ads like "Waste" and "Ski Patrol" are nothing if not negative—but that's not the first thing you notice about them.

Brabender's results are a persuasive argument for quality and creativity. Rick Santorum was such a long shot to win his congressional race in 1990 that the Republican Party declined to support him financially. Santorum upset the heavily favored incumbent in part because his ads stood out against the clutter. "He came through to voters as young, fresh, and bold," Brabender says. "His advertising supported that kind of brand image." Jesse Ventura and the late Senator Paul Wellstone, both of whom hired the consultant Bill Hillsman to produce their ads, are two more examples of challengers who have won with creative ads. The financial benefit is obvious: campaigns would spend a great deal less money if the effective frequency for their television spots was anything like that of consumer ads.

There is reason to be mildly optimistic. The Internet has become the hot new medium for political ads, many not intended for television. This has fostered more imagination, even among hidebound presidential campaigns. Earlier this year the liberal organization MoveOn.org held a contest to design the best anti-Bush ad. It drew more than a thousand submissions, mainly from amateurs who created ads on home computers. The best ones aired on television. Either trend—a fresh medium or a fresh approach—could eventually provide the impetus to break the consultant stranglehold. But not soon enough. ▀



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POMPADOUR WITH A MONKEY WRENCH

Al Sharpton will presumably have a moment in the spotlight at this summer's Democratic convention. But his goal has never been the presidency; he wants to become the leader of black America. Problem is, that job no longer exists

BY MARK BOWDEN

.....

"How does a movement-based political agenda sustain itself in the face of the success that it itself has wrought? It doesn't. It becomes farce." —DEBRA J. DICKERSON, THE END OF BLACKNESS

The Democratic primary race was well under way last year when I went looking for Al Sharpton's national campaign headquarters. It was a hot late-summer day in Washington, D.C., and steam rose from the streets as I drove south from downtown toward Fort McNair, looking for the address given me by Frank Watkins, Sharpton's campaign manager.

I had met Watkins and his candidate two months earlier, on a day when they were shopping for office space. At that point they were just getting started. Sharpton had formally announced his candidacy only weeks before, and the primary season wouldn't begin until January. He strolled noncommittally behind Watkins through a spacious second-floor location over a big Greek restaurant off Dupont Circle, listening with his head tilted and his eyes at half mast as his campaign manager described how each space might be used, where phone banks and computers might be set up, where volunteers might stuff envelopes or unpack posters and pamphlets. I pictured the place, months ahead, alive with the industry of democracy.

Now the race was on. The nine candidates had already met for several televised debates, in which Sharpton's cheerful pugnacity had made him an early audience favorite. He was clearly the most entertaining politician on the stump. His name showed surprising strength in some initial polls. Of course, no one really thought the notorious



Harlem rabble-rouser could be elected President, but Sharpton was an undeniable force in New York City politics; and if he could rally black voters nationwide, the way Jesse Jackson had in his two 1980s presidential campaigns (both involving Watkins), he might arrive at the party's convention, in Boston, with real clout. To accomplish that he would have to score big in the District of Columbia's otherwise insignificant January balloting. It was an unofficial and non-binding event, but because it was the first actual tally and a majority of its voters were African-American, it would gauge Sharpton's core strength—or lack of it. This was one reason

why he wanted his campaign headquarters here.

The address Watkins had given me was nowhere near Dupont Circle; evidently, they had decided on a different place. I found the street in a neighborhood lined with tall apartment buildings, but as I was counting down to the right address, the street abruptly ended. Before me was a small park, and surrounding it were blocks of two-story row houses. I parked my car and went looking on foot.

It seemed an unlikely place for a political office, so I stopped a man on the sidewalk and asked for help. He made a face that mirrored my doubts. "There are no offices here," he said. "Just homes."

When I found the right number, I was standing before a simple residence. A dusty old motorcycle, long unused, was parked to one side of the front door. There were no posters or festive bunting. I double-checked the address and rang the bell.

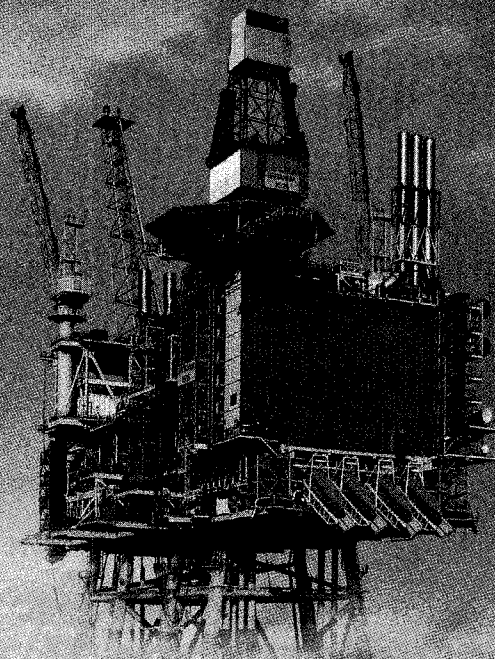
Watkins opened the door. A dour man with thinning hair, he wore shorts, bedroom slippers,

Mark Bowden is an Atlantic national correspondent. Road Work, a collection of his magazine writing, will be published in the fall.

JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

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and a red T-shirt over his small pot belly. Noting my surprise at the surroundings, he executed a slight bow and swept his arms wide. "Welcome to the Al Sharpton for President national campaign headquarters," he said.

For me, it was like the scene in *The Wizard of Oz* when Dorothy glimpses the man behind the curtain. I hadn't expected a juggernaut; Sharpton was at best a minor candidate. But even the most rudimentary campaign has an office and a staff. Watkins was running this one from his living room.

He wasn't happy about it. In fact, just a few weeks later, as the primaries were about to begin, he would resign. This would leave the Sharpton campaign moneyless, virtually staffless, organizationless, and—as the primaries would show—supportless. The campaign had only one thing.

A candidate.

BOOKER T. BELLBOTTOMS

Of all the details I learned about Al Sharpton while sifting through the alp of stories devoted to him since he bellowed his way to notoriety more than fifteen years ago in New York City, the one that struck me most was this: he was in grade school when he began calling himself "Reverend." After evincing a precocious aptitude for preaching, Sharpton was "ordained" by his pastor, a precipitate step that in his Pentecostal church required no education, training, or certification.

Sharpton's campaign manager was running the campaign from his living room. In shorts and slippers, he bowed and said, "Welcome to the Al Sharpton for President national campaign headquarters."

Picture him behind a classroom desk, a fat, imperious ten-year-old boy, inscribing his name at the top of an assignment, gripping his pencil mightily, practicing the dips and curves of his new honorific. Picture him standing his ground before a surprised teacher, or proclaiming his sudden eminence to the other children on the playground, where he excels at none of the contests that earn respect in a boy's world. These are the images that came to mind last June, when I saw Sharpton in person for the first time, a fifty-year-old man arriving to give a speech at a political conference at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, in Washington.

He briskly and commandingly crossed the lobby, head up, eyes forward, heedless of the fuss stirred by his arrival—camera lights, shouts of "Reverend!" and the sudden coalescence of a small mob. Sharpton in person is theatrically

aloof. "Rev" (as he is called by his intimates) is said to have lost a hundred pounds in recent years; he once topped 300, and favored pastel leisure suits and a heavy gold cross around his neck. He is still a long way from passing through the eye of a needle. When he walks, bouncing slightly on the balls of his feet, he leads with belly. These days the gold cross is gone, and he's attired in conservative, well-tailored suits. His famous helmet of conked hair, which used to descend in stiffly contoured waves to his shoulders, is graying now, and has been trimmed to form a bob that protrudes a good six inches from the back of his head, ballast for the great round expanse of his outthrust jowls and chin.

He was late. He is often late.

Awaiting his arrival in the hotel ballroom was an army of supporters: leftist movers and shakers, Winnebago-hipped block captains with megaphone voices, tangle-haired young anarchists with tattooed necks and bejeweled noses, gray-stubbled men with thinning ponytails in patched jeans and T-shirts that read IMPEACH BUSH and SOMEWHERE IN TEXAS A VILLAGE IS MISSING ITS IDIOT, big-armed unionists fed up with corporate power, confrontational lesbians, New Age grandmas, militant vegans, eco-guerrillas, international anti-globalists, fierce pacifists—in other words, the Democratic Leadership Council's nightmare, an agglomeration of fringe believers 1,500 strong from all over America, ready to act up in almost as many directions, any one of them guaranteed to make your average suburban middle-class white voter hastily lock the doors of her car. But these were the kind of people who live their politics, who really work: organizing, marching, phoning, fundraising, cajoling. Assembled here for a morning session of the Take Back America conference, planned by the Campaign for America's Future, they were venting, plotting, and enjoying a three-day carnival of leftist affirmation, all calculated to drag the stubborn centrist donkey bequeathed to them by Bill Clinton back into the turbulent world of "progressivism" (the word "liberal" having been jettisoned after years of conservative abuse). If anybody could think boldly enough to imagine Al Sharpton in the Oval Office, it was the people in this crowd.

Six of the Democratic Party's presidential candidates were scheduled to address this conference in person, but for most of the field the event was dangerous. A mere nod in the direction of gay marriage or taxpayer-funded universal health care, for instance, would be ballot-box suicide. Of the then front-runners, the centrist candidates Joe Lieberman and Bob Graham had decided to avoid the event altogether, and Dick Gephardt had opted to speak from an antiseptic distance, by video. But what did Sharpton have to lose? It would take a strenuous act of God for him to win anything. Most people regarded him as a troublemaker and a demagogue, if not a buffoon. After swimming for more than fifteen years in Manhattan's media shark tank, Sharpton was both shameless and resilient; he had survived gaffes, betrayals, and attacks from all comers, including a would-be

assassin who stabbed him in 1991. (Jesse Jackson unkindly commented that Sharpton's life was spared because the blade was so short and the flab so thick.) No, this candidate was damage-proof.

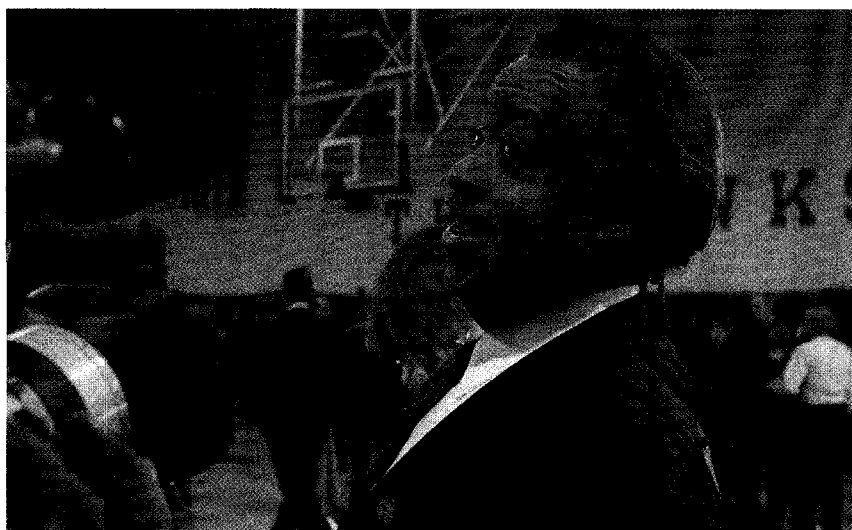
Outrage was Sharpton's milieu. He came wrapped in such a blinding aura of controversy that he could make faux pas that would be disastrous for other candidates on the campaign trail. For Sharpton this Take Back America crowd was pure opportunity. His root political argument, the rhetorical centerpiece of his campaign, was that over the past fifteen years the party had drifted disastrously from its ideals in its search for mainstream voters; it had been co-opted by centrists to the point that "real" Democrats—the folks in that ballroom—had been nearly pushed off the playing field. Two terms of Bill Clinton aping the conservatives, and then ... what? The party had lost the White House and Congress. It had become worse than powerless; it had become purposeless. On this sunny morning in June he planned to meet precisely the people who could help him change that. He needed people and he needed money. He still hadn't raised enough to qualify for federal matching funds, and he would need some kind of organization in the primary states, if only to get his voters to the polls. If ever there was a crowd he needed to work, this was it.

But Sharpton doesn't work crowds. He makes appearances.

His entourage that morning consisted of Watkins, dressed in black and looking typically glum. Together they camped in a large side room across the corridor from the ballroom. Sharpton paced in the empty space, hands clasped behind his back, gathering his thoughts for the performance, while Watkins shooed away the press and the curious. "Not now," he said sternly.

Sharpton entered the hall to a standing ovation. He moved with ease and purpose, seizing the energy in the room and revving it higher. He quickly showed how good he is at the fine political art of preaching to the choir. "Too many of us have been *intimidated* into apologizing for being right!" he said. Of the party's shift to the right, he said, "Not only is it morally wrong and politically cheap, but it doesn't even work!" Loud cheering. "We're coming out of a war that we still don't know why we went in," he said. "Where are the weapons that the Secretary of State brought evidence of before the UN? ... If you could find the weapons *before* the war, how come you can't reveal the weapons now?" Laughter and cheering. He turned his full-throated scorn on President Bush: "He can't find [bin Laden]. He can't find [Saddam]. We have come out of a war with weapons we can't find. Everything Bush has gone after, he can't find. I shouldn't be surprised, because I can't find the votes in Florida that made him the President in the first place." Wild cheering and laughter. There are "too many leaders of the party who have been

elephants running around with donkey jackets on," he said. "And they think we don't know what they are!" Laughter and applause. His speech jumped lightly from topic to topic, punch line to punch line, all stand-up comedy and no substance, but well honed and full of tested material. "Don't get confused; they may be the Christian right, but we're right Christians." Laughter and applause. "George Bush is talking about Iraq being our fifty-first state; well, I say, what about the fifty states that you already occupy?" Cheers. Sharpton summarized his vision for his campaign: "I'm not asking for your help now; I've always been there. We can't win unless we build a movement. We've got to go to the streets, go door-to-door, get the disaffected, the disenfranchised. We've got to get America back so we can take America back!" Then his voice suddenly dropped to a hoarse whisper. "My grandmother is from Alabama. And one time I asked her how to handle a donkey. She said, 'Well, a donkey is stubborn ... but if you



Sharpton on the campaign trail with reporters, 2004

slap the donkey, you can make the donkey respond" ... I'm not here being divisive; I'm trying to slap this donkey!" More laughter and cheering. "If I can wake this donkey up, it will kick George Bush out of the White House!"

The finish left them still standing and cheering wildly. But instead of staying to shake hands, to move from table to table, to take names and phone numbers, to marshal some of this excitement for that "door-to-door" movement he had envisioned, Sharpton abruptly strode from the ballroom and the hotel. Those inspired to support his candidacy were left to fend for themselves. There was no Sharpton campaign outreach or follow-up. Lloyd Hart, an effusive and somewhat easily impressed activist from Martha's Vineyard, who had been swept off his feet by the speech ("I was amazed by his substantive grasp of policy!"), chased after the candidate. He wanted to corral him for a TV interview and to share an idea he had for raising money. Watkins tried to shoo him away, but Hart was persistent: he got his interview and he managed to leave his name and phone

number. He was the only one who did. Sharpton was gone minutes after finishing his speech. He had enlivened, entertained, and even inspired some people, but when he left, all of the energy went with him.

The Take Back America conference was in Washington for three days, but Sharpton's appearance was the only effort there from his campaign.

As colorful, quotable, and provocative as he is, Sharpton is a lousy campaigner. A self-proclaimed man of the people, he doesn't appear to have much time for actual human beings. Writers enjoy writing about him because he's fun, unpredictable, and unafraid of being flamboyantly wrong. Cameras and crowds respond to him because he comes fully to life before an audience, his low growl blossoming into an orotund baritone. He lives for his moments on stage. But one-on-one it's as if he isn't there. A skillful politician working a crowd will make each three-second handshake seem like a deep and permanent connection. When Sharpton meets people, he tends to stare off into space. If his cell phone rings in the middle of a conversation, he'll abruptly walk away and take the call—more-important business. When strangers approach, Sharpton's first instinct is to escape.

He is disorganized and inconsiderate. It is not unusual for him to simply not show up for a scheduled event. In Los Angeles in July he failed to appear after scores of people had gathered for a planned campaign stop at a soul-food restaurant. In Denver in August he stood up a panel discussion titled "Blacks in Government." He abandoned two scheduled events in Wilmington, Delaware, one morning in September when he decided at the last minute, and without informing anyone, to travel to Tennessee instead. About a thousand people were gathered to see him last fall at Friendship United Methodist Church, in Nesmith, South Carolina, a state where in February he would face his most critical primary test. He never appeared. In the spirit of Christian forgiveness, Pastor Leonard Huggins rescheduled the event, and this time the candidate came; but the crowd was only about a tenth the size it had been before. Sharpton pulled out all the stops in his speech anyway. Afterward, according to the *Washington Post* reporter Hanna Rosin, he accepted donations (a "love offering") from the audience but stayed aloof from the people who had come to see him, eating lunch on a dais with the pastor and church elders, speaking briefly to reporters, and then exiting "out the side door."

At rallies and picnics Sharpton will stick to his own small entourage—usually Marjorie Harris-Smikle, the head of his National Action Network; Eddie Harris, a filmmaker (and Marjorie's brother); and one or two local contacts. No so-

cializing, no pressing the flesh, no dialogue with actual voters. His campaign workers have asked him if he's afraid of people, or whether he even likes them. Sharpton dismisses such questions as criticism, which he does not take well. A veil of scorn descends over his face, and he turns away.

"It's just not in my personality construct to worry about others' reactions," he told *The Christian Science Monitor* last year. "It's kind of hard when you've been marching to your own drummer all your life, to start listening to other beats now."

Sharpton has been *somebody* since he was a child. At the 1964 New York World's Fair, he earned small-time fame as a *wunderkind* preacher. After his father, Alfred Sr., walked out on the family that same year, Sharpton started aggressively seeking father figures or mentors—some of whom, including Jesse Jackson, have on occasion resisted his embrace. On the list are his childhood pastor, Bishop Frederick Douglass Washington; the soul singer James Brown (whose hair inspired Sharpton's startling do); the boxing promoter Don King; and Adam Clayton Powell Jr., a skirt-chasing,



Sharpton the New York politician, 1988

high-living former Harlem minister and Democratic congressman—who, Sharpton says admiringly, once told the interviewer David Frost, "I'm the only man in America, black or white, who doesn't give a damn about what people think." Of all his acknowledged role models, Powell is the one about whom Sharpton is most enthusiastic.

It's an old loyalty, and reveals Sharpton as what few people recognize him to be: an anachronism. Powell was one himself. Even at his height, during the 1950s and 1960s, he was more like a character from the glamorous Harlem Renaissance of the Roaring Twenties, with his fine suits and immaculately groomed straightened hair. He certainly did his part for racial empowerment and social reform, but with Powell there was always the sense—which he encouraged—that ultimately he was in the game for himself. He was slick in an era of moral piety, an individualist during a broad awakening of racial identity, an establishment figure (albeit

JAMES MARSHALL/CORBIS

a rakish one) at a time of social rebellion. Sharpton attached himself to Powell when other young black men were drawn to Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X.

"Adam had a defiance and self-confidence that were very appealing," Sharpton told me that day in June, before launching happily into the story of how, as a boy, he had gone with his sister to hear Powell preach. He was so taken with Powell that he dragged his sister with him back to the pastor's office, and demanded to be seen.

"Who should I tell the pastor is calling?" Powell's secretary asked.

"Reverend Alfred Sharpton," the boy said.

It turned out that Powell had heard about the World's Fair boy preacher. "He said, 'Let the kid ride with us,'" Sharpton recalled. "We went to Times Square and Sardi's Restaurant. I remember sitting at Sardi's with Lucille Ball at the next table. I felt like I was in a different world."

Latching on to Powell may have been a bold political move for Sharpton (his first mentor, Bishop Washington, was a Republican), but to the budding black revolutionaries in the schoolyard, Sharpton was a joke.

"This was in the days of the Black Panthers," he said. "We would have debates over tactics for the movement. I was always into nonviolence and integration. They used to call me Booker T. Bellbottoms."

His schoolmates saw him as a throwback then, and despite all the changes in the world and in him since then, he remains one today. He is a man with a megaphone, standing on a street corner and trying to whip up enthusiasm for a protest march that ended thirty years ago. His pitch is pure nostalgia. His campaigns against police brutality have scored some important points in the struggle against the abuse of power, and have illuminated the risks inherent in arming some men and giving them the right to arrest and subdue others; but they no longer strike a deep racial chord in a country where the police chiefs of major cities are as likely to be black as white, and where the officers accused are often the same color as their victims. In 2003 Sharpton embarked on an ultimately futile "mission" to war-torn Liberia that echoed the naively romantic pan-African dreams of the sixties; he got only as far as Ghana before belatedly (and wisely) realizing how dangerous Monrovia was (and besides, no pilot would take him). His goal of uniting the fractious leftist fragments of social discontent in this country into a coherent political movement is the old pipe dream of post-Vietnam social revolutionaries, abandoned as impractical by the Democratic Party twenty years ago. Sharpton's political program is a fairly straightforward call for the redistribution of wealth, right out of the socialist movements of the early twentieth century. His five-year, \$250 billion federal plan to "rebuild the nation's infrastructure," and his national health-care system, ignore ballooning deficits and widespread public disenchantment with huge federal spending programs—not to mention

the disastrous history of such socialist schemes worldwide.

Rip van Sharpton is fighting wars already won. He said that he was running so that the voices of black Americans would be heard; but today—compared with 1965, when the Voting Rights Act was passed—there are four times as many African-Americans in Congress, three times as many in state offices, and twice as many in local positions. And those numbers don't include blacks in appointive office. When Sharpton piously hopes that his candidacy will show black children that they can imagine themselves in the White House someday, he forgets that black candidates have been running for President in every election cycle for the past twenty years; that the Secretary of State, fourth in line for succession to the Oval Office, is Colin Powell, a black man; and that President Bush's National Security Adviser, one of the most influential figures in America, is Condoleezza Rice, a black woman. America has a long way to go before it is color-blind, but some of the important battles have been won.

As Sharpton hurried away from his rousing speech at the Take Back America conference that day last June, I tried to put my finger on what impression he had made. The words that came to mind were "blast from the past."

THE RACE MAN

Lloyd Hart, the spellbound Martha's Vineyard activist, had a good idea for how to raise campaign funds. He knew that among the well-to-do who summer on Martha's Vineyard are a large number of successful African-Americans from all walks of life, including the film director Spike Lee, the Harvard professor and author Henry Louis Gates Jr., the NAACP chairman Julian Bond, and the former Clinton adviser Vernon Jordan.

On August 8 Hart threw a party for Sharpton at Spike Lee's summer house and invited all the prominent black vacationers on the island.

"I mean, I figured if Al could crack this nut, it could be huge," Hart said. "This group that summers here is significant. They have the means, and the clout. So I approached Spike, and he agreed to host it." But the plan proved harder than Hart had imagined.

"Getting these people to turn out for Al was like pulling teeth," he said. "People were very skeptical about his run."

Among those who attended that evening was Elijah Anderson, a noted sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania and the author of *Streetwise* and other books about black urban culture. "I had never met Sharpton before that night," Anderson told me. "Previously I was not a fan, but I went because I was curious. Cornel West was supposed to be there, and a lot of other interesting people. They asked me to go on TV, to in effect be one of his sponsors, but I declined. I went because I wanted to see who else would turn up and support him. It was a mixed crowd, mainly white liberals, but there were a significant number of black people ... people who were down with the community, but well-heeled."

Sharpton had high hopes for the party. These were people with deep pockets. Even if they gave only halfheartedly, he figured, it ought to add up to as much as \$50,000, which his already debt-ridden campaign badly needed. After Sharpton gave his pitch on the lawn outside Lee's house, arguing that he could inject issues into the 2004 campaign that white candidates would not, people did pull out their checkbooks and wallets.

"This guy was not going to get a lot of support," Anderson said. "But most of us there decided he deserved to get some. I was surprised at how articulate he was, and who else was going to raise issues of importance to black Americans, such as the overwhelming number of young blacks in prison? This was an argument even those uncomfortable with Sharpton could buy—that and the fact that he was not going to be even close to a serious candidate. So most people kicked in something for his campaign."

Hart considered the party a rousing success. Watkins was disappointed. They'd raised a total of \$8,000.

Sharpton's fatal problems as a presidential candidate, which became more apparent in the following months, are both general and specific. The general problem is that he is seeking a role in American life that is long gone; call it the Negro Spokesman—about which more in a moment. The specific problem boils down to the sad case of Tawana Brawley.

This is the incident that first gave Sharpton notoriety as an adult, and one that he will never live down. Brawley was a fifteen-year-old girl who in 1987 was found smeared with dog feces and wrapped in a garbage bag. She claimed that she had been kidnapped by a group of two to six white men, who tortured and raped her for four days in the woods near her home in Wappingers Falls, New York. She said that one of the men had worn a badge, which seemed to implicate local law enforcement. Sharpton embraced Brawley's case, and even as evidence mounted that her story was a hoax, his accusations on her behalf grew more and more grandiose, until he had accused virtually the entire state law-enforcement system of complicity. He specifically named Steven Pagones, a Dutchess County assistant district attorney, as one of the rapists.

The charges quickly fell apart in every detail. There was no physical evidence to support them; in fact, the evidence provided a surprisingly clear contradictory account of Brawley's lost four days. As for Pagones, there was no evidence that he had been involved in an assault, and (as one might expect of a man with a very public job) he could account for his whereabouts on the days in question very nearly minute by minute, with scores of witnesses, documents, and even photographs. A grand jury carefully weighed the evidence in the case and issued a report debunking Brawley's story so convincingly that a civil jury subsequently assessed a \$345,000 defamation judgment against those who had publicly accused Pagones. Nevertheless, Sharpton has

steadfastly refused to back down from his support of Brawley or to pay his \$65,000 share of the defamation judgment. By 2001 it had reportedly been paid by a group of wealthy supporters. But the issue hasn't been defused; Sharpton is asked about the Brawley case everywhere, and every time he gives basically the same answer.

"I stood up on her behalf," Sharpton told an interviewer at the Washington, D.C., radio station WTOP last June. "I stand up for people all the time. I disagreed with that jury ... You take a position based on your firm beliefs and the evidence presented to you. We do believe that young lady, and I have a right to believe the young lady."

This puts a noble spin on the episode, but Sharpton did considerably more than "stand up" for Brawley. Without his intervention the case would most likely have been examined and quietly dismissed. Sharpton trumpeted the grotesque charges worldwide and enlarged the incident into a bruising racial issue that harmed everyone involved—particularly the innocent accused. He did this apparently without subjecting Brawley's story to the slightest scrutiny. And he refuses to admit he was wrong. He often says, "I will not say something just to please somebody else," which makes him sound like a man of unswerving conviction, admirable and true. When he says he "disagrees" with the grand jury, that, too, sounds reasonable enough. Sharpton points out that he was ultimately vindicated in his support for the young men accused in the 1989 Central Park jogger case, who, years after a jury declared them guilty of rape and battery, were found to be innocent. He cleverly turns doubts about O.J. Simpson's famous acquittal against his critics, asking why, if they feel free to disagree with a jury, he isn't entitled to do the same in Tawana Brawley's case.

All this makes it sound as though the Brawley matter is one over which reasonable people still differ. It isn't. To anyone who has read the grand jury's calm, devastatingly thorough report, believing Brawley is like believing that the moon is made of cheese. Sharpton has flailed around in his efforts to explain himself, at one point telling a reporter from *The Nation* that he often refuses to back down because he found it so humiliating when his father backed down before a white restaurateur who refused to serve the family—as though stubbornness when wronged, which we admire, somehow equates with stubbornness when wronging someone else. Sharpton's posture is more than stubborn; it is arrogant. It speaks to both his judgment and his intentions.

Debra J. Dickerson, the author of *The End of Blackness* (2004), a discussion of the changing meaning of race in America, thinks that Sharpton epitomizes a certain kind of black mindset. "It believes Tawana Brawley, long past the point when any child gives up on Santa Claus," she writes. "Why? Because she accused whites of hideous acts, the kind of thing they 'would do' ... Anything 'black,' however odious, must be defended or denied, and anything 'white' attacked or dismissed. George Washington's slave-mongering matters,

but O.J. Simpson's wife-beating doesn't. David Duke's racism signifies, but not the Nation of Islam's. Racial profiling of blacks is wrong, but feel free to throw Arab Americans up against the wall. Tawana Brawley's inconsistencies mean nothing, those of a testifying cop, everything. Why? Because whites got away with gang-raping and torturing nigger gals for centuries—big deal, they finally had to pay for one ... It's Kabuki. It's a stylized acting out of unresolved trauma and revenge fantasies. It's neurotic. It's pointless. It's counter-productive. It's demeaning. It keeps blacks from looking in the mirror or finding better uses of their civic time."

So why would anyone—other than those so steeped in historical anger that they embrace this Kabuki—want to vote for Al Sharpton as President of the United States?

This brings us to Sharpton's broader problem: the death of the Negro Spokesman. I use this antiquated term because the concept itself is so dated. Throughout our history white America has recognized a certain few figures as "leaders" of the black community—a pattern that Michael Eric Dyson, a writer and a humanities professor at the University of Pennsylvania, has called "an old, abiding problem." They alone were considered able to speak for the whole race. This was true on a local level and also nationally, as prominent African-Americans from Frederick Douglass to Booker T. Washington to Martin Luther King Jr. stepped up to serve as spokesmen for people otherwise excluded from public life. Sometimes, as with King, these figures had the enthusiastic support of black Americans; sometimes, as with Washington, they did not. In a country that increasingly accepts itself as multiracial, where blacks are no longer even the largest minority, the role of the Negro Spokesman is as outmoded as the Victrola. Most black intellectuals, particularly younger ones, are glad to be rid of it.

With the success of the twentieth-century civil-rights movement and the rise of a strong black middle class, anyone looking for a "black leader" in this country needn't look far: blacks in most states have elected representatives of their own race, and academia now boasts many black scholars. Jesse Jackson, who actively sought the mantle of the Negro Spokesman after King's assassination (much as Sharpton is seeking it now), actually closed the door on this phenomenon himself by running for President in 1984 and 1988, and doing surprisingly well. In effect, Jackson's candidacy carried the traditionally nonpolitical role of black leadership into electoral politics.

Dickerson believes that Sharpton doesn't get this. Although she feels that he deserves a lot of credit for some of the work he has done against police brutality in New York, she told me, "Reverend Al is not very visionary or forward-looking. His presidential run seems predicated on the proposition that the civil-rights movement wasn't that successful. It was quite successful. Racism is still there, but it is much more subtle and organic; it plays itself out as interest-group politics today. The fight is no longer a fight for our race but a fight for

justice ... Black people are much more plugged in to the system today. The progress of the movement had made it very clear to all that it cannot be Us versus Them. Blacks today are more concerned about outcomes than color."

Mat Johnson, a novelist and a professor at Bard College, agrees. He told me, "Black people are way past the point where they think they will further their agenda just by voting for someone black. Voters today are more sophisticated than that. In that sense Sharpton is a dinosaur; he's a white liberal's idea of what a black leader is."

Civil-rights progress has desimplified black politics. African-American voters no longer come in one flavor. Today they find common cause in a yearning for continued racial progress, but they increasingly disagree—just as white voters disagree—over how to achieve it. There are still radical black activists, but there are also Clarence Thomas, the arch-conservative U.S. Supreme Court Justice; J. C. Watts, the conservative former congressman from Oklahoma; and many others who defy the old model of black leadership. There are similar divisions in the ranks of black intellectuals, who publicly debate the advantages and disadvantages of social-welfare programs and affirmative action, the murder trial of O.J. Simpson, the implications of gangsta rap, and the call for slavery reparations. The rise of an educated, ambitious black middle class has begun to alter the formerly predictable patterns of black voting. Young blacks are

Sharpton (or "Rev," as intimates call him) proceeds on the principle that if you insist loudly enough that the broomstick between your legs is a pony, eventually the thing will whinny and gallop.

increasingly unimpressed by the choices the Democratic Party offers. A *New York Times* article by Lynette Clemetson last August reported that whereas 74 percent of African-Americans had called themselves Democrats four years ago, only 63 percent did so in 2003.

John McWhorter, an associate professor of linguistics at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of *Losing the Race* (2000) and *Authentically Black* (2003), believes that Sharpton is part of a culture of victimology. Like Dickerson, McWhorter sees traditional black protest politics as a kind of theater in which all blacks, under pain of being labeled a race traitor (as he has been), must play along.

McWhorter sees Sharpton as an "inveterate liar" and an "opportunistic cartoon" who sits, with Congressman Charles Rangel, "at the gates of Harlem like the lions at the library on Forty-second Street, more interested in trying to

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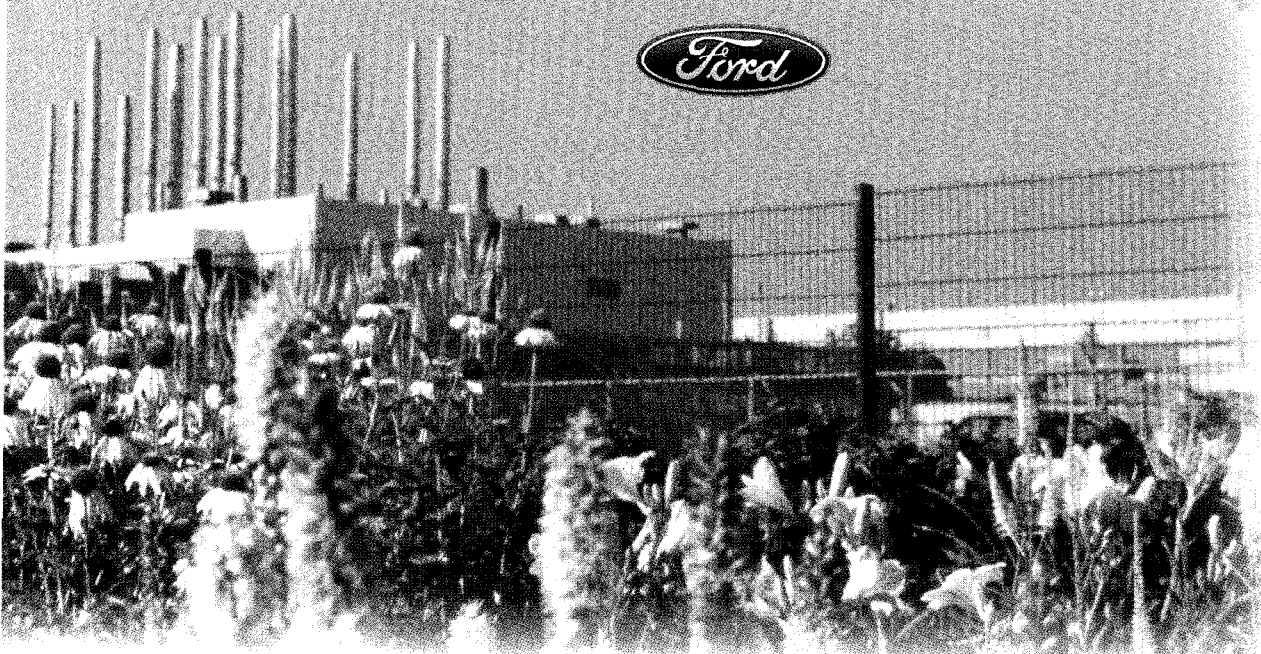
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steer development efforts in the old Big City Boss style than in lifting Harlem out of its misery at all costs." Sharpton's politics and even his goals are as anachronistic as his straightened hair, and—here's the farce—he appears oblivious. He has chosen to define himself as the Negro Spokesman, and by God, the rest of the world will have to come around. He proceeds on the principle that if you insist loudly enough that the broomstick between your legs is a pony, eventually the thing will whinny and gallop.

THE VIRTUAL CAMPAIGN

Fundraising is going badly," Frank Watkins said when I visited him at "Sharpton national campaign headquarters," just weeks after the disappointing Spike Lee event. "The campaign is going to hell."

Watkins is a serious fellow. A lifelong Christian activist who has worked in left-wing politics ever since his hopes of playing for the Philadelphia Phillies fell through, he helped manage both of Jesse Jackson's presidential campaigns. I traveled briefly with Jackson in Texas during the 1984 campaign, and saw the excitement he generated everywhere. Jackson is a born politician. On the road he attracted crowds wherever he stopped, and usually spent time warmly meeting and greeting. He would stop at the local high school and work out in the gym with the basketball team—he still had a mean baseline jumper, and when he moved to the paint, few schoolboys dared get in his way.

Watkins is the one who encouraged Jackson to run. If anybody knew how to sell a black candidate with somewhat mixed appeal to the political mainstream, he was that man. The strategy now was specific: If Sharpton could win the District primary in January (Jackson had won it with 80 percent of the vote in 1988), it might bump his numbers in Iowa and New Hampshire enough to surprise people. That would position him to possibly win the primary in South Carolina, where more than half the voters were black, and where polls then showed Sharpton running strong. And that would crown him a serious candidate, and put him in the game right up to the convention.

But nothing was playing out according to the script. The money raised so far was well short of that needed for federal matching funds: at least \$100,000 in contributions of no more than \$250 apiece, and from a total of twenty states. The target for each state was twenty contributors and \$5,000. In Alabama the campaign had raised only \$45.

Watkins sat in his shorts and slippers in front of a computer in his living room, notepads and folders scattered at his feet, wearing a telephone headset, answering my questions, and fielding two or three calls a minute. It was hard to tell when he was talking to me. He would be telling me about his failure to secure a church after graduating from divinity school (the church elders objected to his activist methods) and then, without segue, would answer a question from someone on the phone; then he'd slide right

back in where he had left off with me. He did this with ease. At that point he was campaign manager, speechwriter, researcher, receptionist, scheduler, chief fundraiser, accountant, strategist ... "You name it," he said, and took another phone call.

"Al is doing great in one sense," Watkins said, his attention focused on me again. "People love him in the debates—he's a terrific speaker. None of the other candidates can touch him. But we've raised about two hundred thousand [nearly all of it in a few contributions too large to meet the FEC requirements], which is next to nothing. It's already spent. We need a campaign structure, an organization in each of the states. We need a political director, a press person, someone to coordinate fundraising, a research-and-issues person. I told Al when we started that we would need at least three million dollars for 2003, and double that for 2004." He considered those figures to be modest. Jackson had raised \$11 million in 1984, and \$21 million in 1988. But not even Watkins's low goals had been met.

"He should be spending three hours a day on the telephone," Watkins said. "He ought to have one hundred prospects lined up, and he should just move on down the list, one call at a time, asking for contributions. Every day. But he doesn't like to ask people for money. Who does? But you can't campaign without it."

He took another phone call. I noticed that he still had a large album collection from the sixties and seventies, and a turntable.

"I identify with people who identify with the left out," he said, to me again. "And Sharpton identifies with the left out. He polls highest in the black community, and I understood when I joined up that he wouldn't get a lot of pull beyond it. But my religious background says that God can take a crooked stick and hit a straight lick."

Watkins had big plans. He wanted to run a real campaign. The office he had wanted to rent over the Greek restaurant would have cost \$11,000 a month—a bargain. He had envisioned a staff of twenty-five, although he could have managed with just twenty. He has a computer program to help him do targeted fundraising and build an organization on the Internet, but without funds—perhaps \$2,500 a month—he hadn't been able to make use of it. He wanted to prepare a fifteen-minute videotape, something that campaign workers could use as the centerpiece for small gatherings or rallies. He envisioned twenty or thirty such gatherings around the country after each debate, raising maybe \$1,000 per event. But he didn't have the money to prepare, copy, and distribute the tapes, or a list of people to receive them. He wanted to do a direct-mail campaign, soliciting donations from *Black Enterprise* and *Jet* and from thousands of elected black officials, but ...

His biggest frustration was Sharpton's idiosyncratic schedule.

"I tell him, 'Rev, every day counts,'" Watkins said. "You

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are doing the schedule, and the schedule should be doing you.' His appearances should make political sense."

Strategy, he told me, "is my strong suit." A yellow legal pad on the floor charted the number of days left until the District primary—139. Watkins had calculated how many days Sharpton needed to spend in the city and in each important state. The most important state was South Carolina. On his computer he showed me a graphic display of the state; using voting records from 2000, he had broken it down county by county. After fielding another phone call, he explained the color coding, which showed the counties where Sharpton could hope to run strong, those where he didn't have a prayer, and those where he might still make progress. With the days counting down rapidly now, Watkins thought his candidate ought to be working South Carolina the way a catcher breaks in his mitt, pounding it again and again. Instead ... "He's off in California, preaching in Oakland and meeting with the mayor of San Francisco, speaking about the [Gray Davis] recall campaign."

Sharpton is irresistibly drawn to cameras and lights, and few of those were to be found along the hot, dusty back roads of rural South Carolina. Yet if he hoped to make an impact, a real impact, something more meaningful than those fleeting moments of TV time, that's where he needed to be.

Except ... Sharpton was not actually campaigning in the real world. His run existed only on TV and radio, in newspapers, and on the Internet. Watkins never got that, or never accepted it. When he left, on the last day of September, along with Kevin Gray, the South Carolina coordinator (the only paid coordinator in any state), the last vestige of real campaigning vanished. The wheels had entirely left the road. Sharpton's run had become an idea of a campaign. It had gone virtual.

A ROLICKING GOOD TIME WITH AL

Early in the morning on Tuesday, January 13, the day of the District primary, Pastor Melvin G. Brown was standing by himself, cradling a cup of steaming coffee from 7-Eleven, looking out expectantly toward the entrance to the Fort Totten Metro-station parking lot. According to Sharpton's daily agenda, the one posted on his cool Web site (www.sharpton2004.org), Rev was to have begun this important day greeting commuters before dawn at the busy station, the first event in a projected day of classic get-out-the-vote campaigning. Brown had showed up on time. The sun was just a dull orange glow over the treetops when I met him there, about a half hour after Sharpton was supposed to have arrived. The pastor, a broad-beamed man with salt-and-pepper hair and a big jeweled cross of gold hanging around his neck, looked peeved but hopeful.

"He should be here in about fifteen minutes," he said.

Commuters streamed past us and through the subway turnstiles, hundreds of unshaken hands per minute.

Brown, too, had worked for both of Jesse Jackson's presi-

dential campaigns. He had been asked days earlier by a local radio personality, Mark Thompson, to help with Sharpton's primary push. So far he seemed only marginally impressed.

"Jackson had a few more connections," Brown said. "He was able to attract a little more enthusiasm and excitement. He also had more financial resources."

And he tended to show up. In the months since I visited Watkins, things had continued to go badly for the campaign. Representative Jesse Jackson Jr. had decided to endorse Howard Dean, then the front-runner—a decision that the congressman would most likely not have made without his father's approval. This was a blow. Sharpton had campaigned in Chicago for Jesse Jr.'s successful congressional run, and had long depicted himself as a political heir to the elder Jackson. His whole campaign had been conceived in that spirit. Sharpton lashed back with a bitter public statement to the effect that Jesse Sr. was over the hill and Jesse Jr. was an Uncle Tom. "You are not doing nothing but playing with yourself," he said, addressing the Illinois congressman. "These people are not discussing you; they need a few cosmetic pictures to add to their profile. I'm ready to put out ads telling all Uncle Toms, At least send me part of the money you get from selling out, because if I wasn't in the race they wouldn't be offering you nothing. I put a whole new generation of Toms in business." In the midst of this spat Jesse Sr. called Sharpton "over the top," "mostly inaccurate," and "ridiculous." There had been embarrassing stories just that week about how his penniless campaign was paying for him to stay at four-star hotels all over the country—a practice that Sharpton defended ("We're holding fundraisers. Do they expect us to host them in a dump?") but nevertheless promised to curtail.

Sharpton had shone in a December appearance on *Saturday Night Live*, in which he demonstrated a strong singing voice, a willingness to poke fun at himself, and some mean dance moves. But an hour in the comedy spotlight was a far cry from having his candidacy taken seriously.

He was the only candidate whose strategy turned on doing well in this District beauty contest, and he was the only one in town for it. He had replaced Watkins with Charles Halloran, a veteran political manager, and claimed to have raised sufficient money to qualify for federal matching funds, although the Federal Election Commission had not approved his application. Wesley Clark had received \$7.5 million, John Edwards \$6 million; even Lyndon LaRouche had qualified for more than a million. Sharpton had borrowed \$150,000 in anticipation of getting the funding. (Eventually the FEC would give Sharpton \$100,000, and would then initiate an investigation with an eye toward taking it back, claiming that the candidate might not have played entirely by the rules.) He had finally opened a proper campaign office in the District, with much fanfare, just over a month earlier. The excitement was mostly manufactured. Michael Doyle, of the *Sacramento Bee*,

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noted the striking paucity of Sharpton supporters at the event, and quoted a drum major with the 120-piece marching band from nearby Bowie State University as saying, "To be honest with you, this is just a performance for us." The headquarters was a small room on the second floor of a brown brick building in Anacostia, over a hair salon and adjacent to a dentist's office.

A win or a big showing in the District was critical. Washington voters are 70 percent minority, 60 percent African-American. Five of the nine candidates had decided not to run there; with Sharpton, only Howard Dean, Dennis Kucinich, and Carol Moseley Braun were on the ballot, along with seven obscure hopefuls. It was a chance—one of the only chances—for Sharpton to win something, to show that he could rally and inspire black voters as Jesse Sr. had.

A young woman entering the Fort Totten station eyed the waiting group of reporters and cameras and approached Pastor Brown. "What's going on?" she asked.

"Reverend Al Sharpton is going to be here," he said. "He's running a little late."

The woman waited for a few minutes and then pushed

and trying to keep warm. Mark Thompson, Sharpton's point man for the day, arrived with a megaphone. He was a young man with a basketball-size knot of dreadlocked hair bundled behind his head. Using the megaphone, he belted out a few amplified words to the empty alleyway behind the school.

"Come meet Reverend Al Sharpton, the only man to campaign in D.C.!"

The candidate finally arrived in a gigantic tan Lincoln Navigator. He stepped out into the cold and paced around for a few moments, scowling. This absence of voters to greet was evidently confirming his worst suspicions about the wisdom of visiting polling places early on a winter morning. With nobody around except a Dean volunteer, it was looking like an unfortunate TV photo op. He huddled with Thompson, strategizing. When a radio reporter approached to ask a question, the candidate growled, "We're talking!" She backed off.

A solution to the photo-op difficulty materialized when a herd of middle school students appeared below, walking across the playground. Thompson was after them like a border collie.

"All you students who want to meet Reverend Al Sharpton, come on up!" the megaphone barked.

None of the students stopped walking.

Again, the megaphone: "Y'all want to meet Reverend Sharpton?"

"No!" one of the students, a boy, shouted back.

Undeterred, Thompson and the eager candidate barreled right past the elderly guardian at the top of the steps and chased down the somewhat bewildered-looking students, most of whom got away. One or two submitted to having their hands shaken for the TV cameras, and then quickly scampered.

It was a little better at the next polling place, where Sharpton chatted with two voters. Then he moved on to Anacostia Senior High School for a pre-arranged meeting with Fredericka Freeman, an eighteen-year-old senior about to cast her first vote. Freeman was the only voter in sight. There was a little problem with getting all the cameras past the guards and metal detectors at the front doors, but (in brazen violation of polling-place rules) Sharpton accompanied the newly hatched voter down the aisle of the school auditorium and stood proudly by for the cameras as she filled in her ballot and deposited it.

"This is what my campaign is about," he said.

After that Sharpton broke for breakfast. When he got out of the Navigator at the restaurant, he gestured for me to join him.

Like many men used to being at the center of an entourage, Sharpton has a way of being with you without



Sharpton on the eve of defeat in South Carolina, 2004

on through the turnstile to catch a train. A half hour later there was still no sign of the candidate. "His schedule is kind of fluid," Brown said.

Eventually we got word that he wasn't coming. Brown made a few calls on his cell phone and determined that Sharpton's campaign day was actually going to begin about two hours later than planned, at a nearby polling place. So we all drove over there.

There weren't many voters at the Bertie Backus Middle School. "Most everybody has come and gone before they went off to work," said an elderly gentleman guarding an invisible line atop the steps leading down to the playground and polling place, which campaign workers dared not cross. A small group of reporters, some of the same ones who had been at the Metro stop, waited, bouncing from foot to foot

fully acknowledging that you are there. As I hovered in his space, he chatted on the phone, shook hands with the restaurant staff, picked out a table, huddled with Marjorie Harris-Smikle, and placed his order (eggs, turkey bacon, and grits). Not until his plate had been delivered and he had taken his seat did he turn his attention to me. There is something pugilistic about the way Sharpton sits for an interview. He squares himself in his chair, shoulders back, head up, gazing off into the middle distance, the heavy lids of his big eyes drooping. (His wife calls him "Eyes.") He rolled them balefully to me, as if to say, *Okay, I'm ready—give me your best shot.*

I asked him about Watkins's departure, and about Jesse Jackson Jr.'s decision to endorse Howard Dean.

He regarded them as the same betrayal. "I think the fact is, the day after Frank resigned, Junior went with Dean," he said. "I think that maybe Frank's leaving had something to do with them deciding to go with Dean ... I was disappointed [about Junior's decision] more for him than for me, because Illinois is way down the road on the list of primaries. I would have thought that he would have wanted to continue the tradition that gave his name the validity it did in the first place. So I was disappointed for him ... Politically, it meant very little to me."

Politically, it had been disastrous for him, actually. I asked him whether he thought black politics in America had changed since the civil-rights years, and he said no, in so many words. He felt it was still about young leaders' operating outside the system and battling the more entrenched mainstream blacks. The one difference he did see was that certain young elected black officials from the North (he did not actually mention Jesse Jackson Jr. by name here), who have had no experience with the movement, overestimate the significance of their "enfranchisement." He told me, "So they keep saying, 'Black politicians, it's a new day.' But their status is no different than those before them. So the question becomes, Is it their illusion or is it their reality? And I think in the gap between illusion and reality, a lot of times, they lose their constituents, and I think that's the problem ... It wasn't about new. It was about whether they were 'establishment' party politicians."

He still seemed genuinely enthusiastic about his prospects.

"We'll do well in South Carolina ... Let me just put it this way: If forty to forty-five percent of the voters in South Carolina are African-American, you have nine candidates. Let's say, theoretically, I get fifty percent of the black vote. If there's not a major go for one of the white candidates, you win just with that. I don't think anyone is looking at that ... The next primary is the Michigan caucus, which is the same week. Then that Saturday is Virginia, where I'm the only person of color on the ballot. If we do the scientific delegate-processing that we intend, I could come into Super Tuesday with as many delegates or more than the front-

runner ... and when you get to the convention, he who has the delegates has the leverage."

Sharpton won just 34 percent of the vote in the District primary that day, finishing second to Howard Dean (43 percent) and ahead of Carol Moseley Braun (12 percent). He could boast about finishing second, but it did not bode well for a man trading on the color of his skin to be bested on what might be called his own turf by a white former governor of Vermont—especially considering that Dean hadn't even bothered to campaign in D.C.

The "victory party" that night was an anemic affair at a nightclub. Notably absent were any of the "grassroots" supporters Sharpton was always talking about. Most of those present were from the press, waiting for the candidate to make a statement. In contrast, 150 Dean supporters were packed into another D.C. bar awaiting their candidate's victory phone call.

When Sharpton swept in, the TV lights switched on. He arranged his paltry entourage around him in a corner, which made the event seem crowded.

"The fact that I won one third of the vote where there were only four major candidates on the ballot speaks volumes about what we can do in South Carolina, Delaware, Missouri, and Virginia in the coming weeks with nine in the race," Sharpton said. "I am quite sure that the candidates not on the D.C. ballot will take away many more votes from the front-runner in the upcoming primaries in states with heavy minority populations. Our grassroots efforts and progressive message will continue to be a decisive factor in communities of color across the nation."

I was on the other side of the cameras, in a thin semicircle of reporters, aware that the real audience for this moment was millions of Americans at home—who were no doubt thinking they were missing a rollicking good time with Al in downtown D.C.

SOUTH CAROLINA

I was surprised to see a pretty good crowd of poll workers gathered around Sharpton's campaign office in Columbia, South Carolina, early on February 3, a chilly gray morning. It was the day of truth for Sharpton's campaign, whose bankruptcy few could fully comprehend. Where had poll workers come from?

With mounting debts (they would total nearly half a million dollars by spring), without a campaign staff, without an organization, without funding, and without any real popular support, Sharpton had, in effect, struck a deal with the devil. In a remarkable story that would run a week later, the *Village Voice* reporter Wayne Barrett documented how the candidate had increasingly leaned on Roger Stone, a notorious Republican Party operative. Stone and Sharpton were kindred spirits on different ends of the political spectrum, in that neither man was a stranger to public outrage. Stone had been scheming for Republicans

since the days of Watergate, when as a young functionary allied with Richard Nixon's "plumbers" he made a donation to the New Hampshire primary campaign of Nixon's rival Pete McCloskey in the name of the "Young Socialist Alliance." More recently he had been a leader of the effort that shut down the Miami-Dade County recount, a step on the path to George W. Bush's being awarded the presidency. Everyone has heard of politics and strange bedfellows, but why would Sharpton, who rails against Bush at every opportunity, be in league with a man who helped put Bush in the White House?

There would be plenty of speculation in the coming weeks that Sharpton had planned it all along. He certainly was not above playing spoiler, and his antipathy for the current national leadership of the Democratic Party was well known. He had feuded with the party chairman, Terry McAuliffe, and had bragged about using his influence in New York to undermine the Democratic mayoral bid of Mark Green. But the timing of his alliance with Stone, who had been quietly bailing out the sinking ship of Sharpton's campaign, suggested that it had less to do with strategy than with desperation. Sharpton was flailing. He was accepting support wherever he could find it. At first he had just accepted Stone's advice. The old Republican prankster is said to have suggested the now infamous debate challenge to Dean about the dearth of African-Americans in

To be eligible for federal matching funds, Sharpton needed \$100,000 in contributions of no more than \$250 apiece, and from a total of twenty states. In Alabama the campaign had raised only \$45.

Vermont's gubernatorial cabinet, and to have furnished Sharpton with an ax handle to wield as a prop in the July NAACP debate, when the candidate accused the party of harboring the old segregationist mentality of the former Georgia governor Lester Maddox, who had used an ax handle to roust blacks from his restaurant. The candidate had gone from accepting debating tips to, reportedly, accepting \$200,000 from Stone to keep his campaign afloat. He still owed Frank Watkins just under \$60,000, and Kevin Gray \$38,000. Charles Halloran, Watkins's replacement, had managed the Stone-run independent New York gubernatorial campaign of the billionaire Tom Golisano in 2002. There could be only one plausible reason for Stone's helping Sharpton, and that was to undermine the mainstream appeal of the Democratic Party by forcing whoever became the front-runner to deal with Sharpton's ostentatiously leftist

agenda. There was no plot—just a marriage of convenience, albeit one of the more bizarre in modern politics. Stone simply wanted Sharpton to be Sharpton, which coincided perfectly with the candidate's own plans. But the alliance would pay off for neither man unless the candidate could deliver votes on this day in South Carolina.

The crowd of poll workers at Sharpton's campaign office was bigger than any I had seen at his rallies. So I started asking questions. A tall, toothless man with gray hair and a week's worth of gray stubble over a sallow complexion "approached the night before at a homeless shelter and promised \$75 each for a day's work handing out Sharpton pamphlets. Another man nearby said the same. They were a little disgruntled to learn on arriving that the amount would be only \$50, but they were undeterred.

"Are you Sharpton supporters?" I asked.

Both men rolled their eyes and laughed. "Hey, fifty bucks for ten hours, that's five bucks an hour," the toothless man said. "I'd hand out pamphlets for anybody for five bucks an hour. That'll buy me cigarettes and a good meal."

"I got no political interests," the second man said.

With the others was a group of young women from Benedict College, where Sharpton had visited the previous Friday. They, too, had been promised \$50 to \$75 for the day. One of them said that the candidate "came to our school and ... spoke about issues important to the black community"—but clearly the money was the draw. Eddie Harris, the filmmaker who is part of Sharpton's traveling entourage, was shuttling cars full of these workers out to various districts around the city.

It didn't look good. Sharpton had been bragging about his "grassroots" strategy in this state for months, about the enthusiastic support he had been finding here, especially in black communities, and this was supposed to be the one place where he had a measure of organization. "I fully expect to win primaries in the coming weeks," he had said in the South Carolina primary debate, just days earlier. There was little evidence of momentum.

The night before, he had held an impressive gospel rally at Reid Chapel AME, a simple clapboard house of worship with a congregation of about five hundred. The church was packed and rocking. The church's own Voices of Unity choir put on a magnificent performance, swaying, clapping, and electrifying the overflow audience with cascading, rhythmic choruses of infectious hymns. It was followed by the University of South Carolina's Touch of Faith choir, and then by the main attraction, the gospel singing star John P. Kee. Kee was the man most people had come to see, so Sharpton took over before bringing him out.

"We decided to end this campaign right where we started, in church, the *black* church in South Carolina," he said, rocking back and forth. "Tomorrow we're going to make history! I believe in taking the possible out of the impossible. I started this morning at a slave market in Charleston,

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and I stood there in a place where a few hundred years ago black men stood to be assessed as slaves, and this morning I stood there to be assessed as a candidate for President of the United States. We're going from property to President!"

"Amen," said a voice in the congregation.

"Disgrace to Amazing Grace!"

"You tell it!"

"They can't poll us because they can't find us. To just vote for who they tell you to vote for is to waste your vote! ... You know, I've been black all my life. I've been black three times. I've been a black baby, I've been a black boy, and now I'm a black man! I've been black three times!"

And on he went, warmly received. Then Sharpton asked for a show of hands. "How many of you all are going to vote tomorrow?"

About two thirds of the hands in the audience went up.

"Okay, now how many of you are going to vote for me?"

A much smaller number of hands went up, about a third of the earlier showing.

"Be honest now," Sharpton said.

It looked to me as though the congregation was being painfully honest. A clipboard was being passed around the church for people to sign up to work the polls the next day. When it had made the trip down every pew, two names were on it. Two.

Sharpton said he was running to give African-Americans a voice, but there are four times as many blacks in Congress today as there were in 1965. And close to the Oval Office are Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice.

"I was contacted about setting all that up only a week ago," said the church's pastor, the Reverend James R. Glover. "I think most people came out to hear the music."

The next evening, after the polls closed, I sat with Sharpton's South Carolina public-information coordinator, Cheryl Washington, at the bar of the Sheraton Inn during Sharpton's "victory" party, waiting for the early returns. Washington seemed tired, and was disappointed that the band that was supposed to come had not showed up. Most of the people at the party were reporters. A few camera crews were setting up in one corner for the ritual post-primary speech. The large room was mostly empty.

"There really was just a few of us volunteering," she said. "I would love to get a job at the U.S. Capitol. I did an internship there with Congressman [James] Clyburn's office, and worked there for a few years. I'm impressed with the way Reverend Sharpton handles the press. They

are always trying to trip him up and they can't ever do it."

The returns were not good. Sharpton had won only nine percent of the vote. The estimate on various TV channels kept swaying between nine percent and 10 percent, but eventually settled down to the single digit. John Edwards had won 45 percent of the vote, John Kerry 30 percent. Sharpton's hopes—that white candidates would split the white vote at least four ways and he would carry half of the black vote, or more—were dashed. I thought of the paltry show of hands at the church the night before. That crowd had demonstrated about the same level of support as South Carolina's blacks as a whole. Sharpton had received only one of every five votes cast by African-Americans. He had won exactly one of South Carolina's fifty-five delegates. It wasn't just a loss—it was a repudiation.

I called up Lloyd Hart on Martha's Vineyard.

"This is a great victory for us!" he said. Then he said some other things, but I confess I was too astonished to take notes. (Hart abruptly switched his support to Ralph Nader three weeks later.)

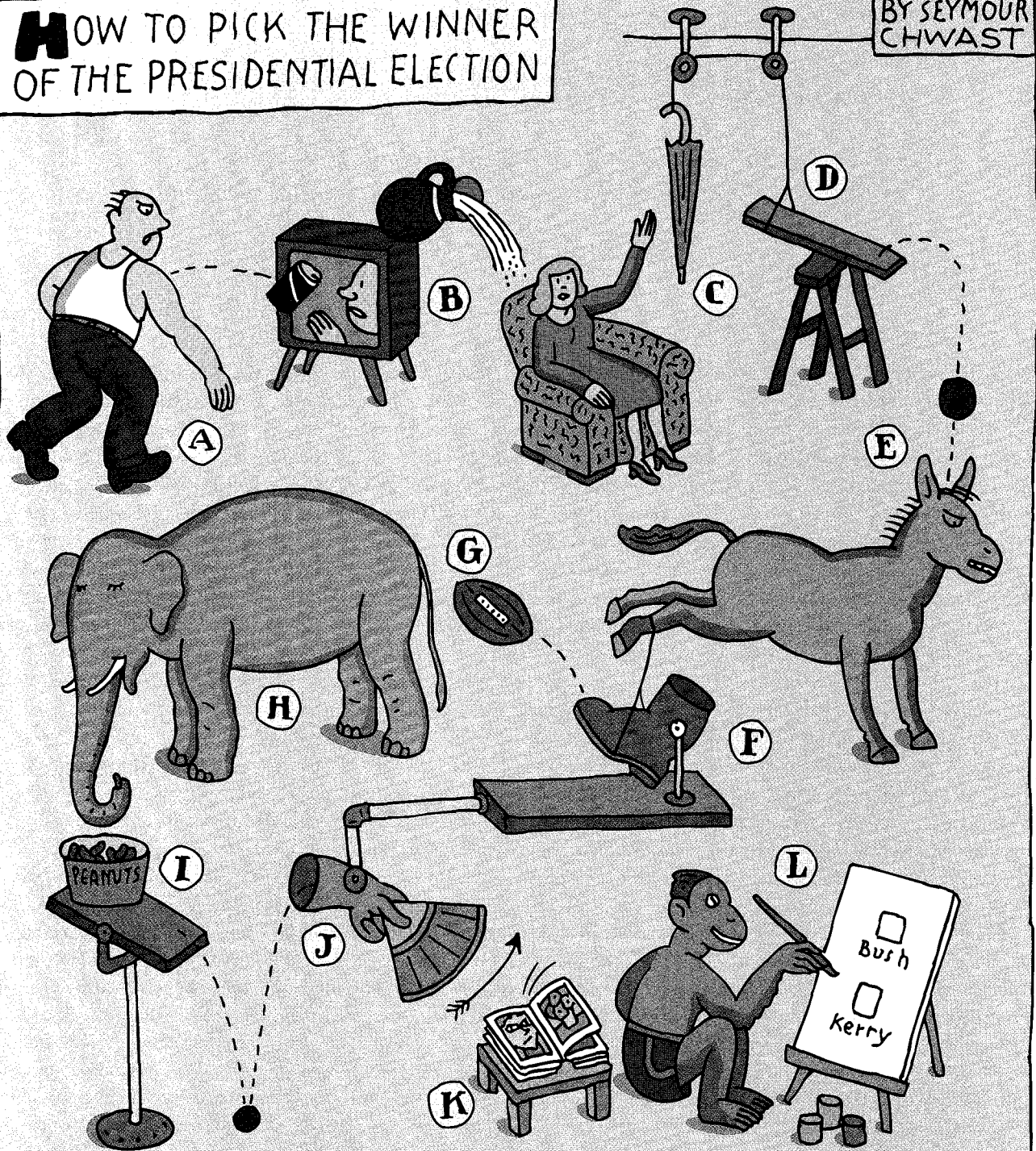
The defeat was so resounding that the New York papers speculated about Sharpton's having hurt his standing as a black power broker in the city—something no one (certainly not Sharpton) would have imagined when he dreamed up this campaign. He had been fond of saying to black audiences, "We can't lose!" Well, maybe *they* couldn't lose, but he could. The revelations of his ties to Stone broke a week later, and people all over the country began questioning his motives.

In the following weeks Lieberman, Clark, and Dean bowed out. By the end of the month the Democratic race was a contest between Kerry and Edwards, with Sharpton and Kucinich flapping like scraps of colorful cloth on the tail of their kite. The FEC had still not awarded Sharpton any matching funds (there were suspicions about some of the reported donations), and the campaign was reportedly \$500,000 in debt. Sharpton had still not paid Watkins or Gray. Less than a month earlier he had outlined for me his strategy of arriving at Super Tuesday, March 2, with "as many delegates or more than the front-runner." When Super Tuesday rolled around, he had just sixteen delegates, compared with 754 for John Kerry and 220 for John Edwards. Even under the terms Sharpton had set for himself, South Carolina was the end.

Or so it seemed. The crowd at the Sheraton Inn victory bash never filled out that night. Sharpton made his appearance in time for the eleven o'clock news, strutting in with his usual small entourage, resplendent, smiling, light gleaming off the sheen of his slicked-back hair. He squared himself in front of the array of microphones, and to the small clump of reporters and cameras declared, "Tonight we started a movement that will transform the Democratic Party ... This is an *astonishing* boost in the arm for the Sharpton campaign." ■

HOW TO PICK THE WINNER OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

BY SEYMOUR CHWAST



ANGRY TV VIEWER (A) THROWS BEER CAN AT SCREEN, UPSETTING PITCHER (B). WOMAN, THINKING THAT THE ROOF LEAKS, REACHES FOR UMBRELLA (C), WHICH UPSETS BALL (D), HITTING DONKEY (E) ON HEAD. HE KICKS REAR LEGS, CAUSING BOOT (F) TO KICK FOOTBALL (G), WHICH HITS SLEEPING ELEPHANT (H). HE WAKES UP, EATS PEANUTS, UPSETTING THE BALANCE (I), CAUSING BALL TO BOUNCE AND FALL INTO GLOVE (J), MAKING FAN TO SWISH, TURNING PAGE OF ART BOOK (K) TO PICASSO PAINTING, INSPIRING CHIMP (L) TO FILL IN THE BOX OF THE WINNER.

APOLOGIES TO RUBE GOLDBERG

KERRY FACES THE WORLD

*What would a John Kerry foreign policy look like?
In some ways a lot like one the current President's father could endorse*

BY JOSHUA MICAH MARSHALL

Illustration by Richard Thompson

.....

In early February I sat in a Starbucks in downtown Washington with Dan Feldman, who is helping to organize Senator John Kerry's foreign-policy team. We discussed Kerry's vision of America's role in the world, and the people who might play important roles in his Administration if he is elected President, touching on everything from the crucial issue of Iraq and the simmering crises in North Korea and Iran to NATO and the proper balance between international alliances and the brute force necessary to secure American interests abroad—collectively, the foreign-policy questions that are central to the next election, and to the next four years.

Even before Kerry triumphed in the primaries, foreign policy generally, and Iraq specifically, dominated the campaign—a state of affairs from which he unquestionably benefited, though the benefits may not hold indefinitely. His experience, both as a senator and as a combat veteran, proved instrumental in his victory, and as the situation deteriorates overseas, he and Bush, who was expected to be comfortably ahead, are essentially running neck and neck. At the same time, Kerry has come under constant attack for failing to articulate a clear plan to halt Iraq's slide into anarchy.

As we discussed this, Feldman outlined a course that starkly departed from the one charted by President Bush, yet was equally unlike the approach—characterized by soft multilateralism and fealty to the United Nations—portrayed by Republicans as typical of Democratic foreign policy. Feldman emphasized the need for skilled diplomatic management and a willingness to use force abroad, but also an essential caution. The more he spoke, the more he called to mind the policies of the first Bush Administration.

George H.W. Bush has receded into history. But his Administration's traditional if unimaginative attitude toward foreign relations lives on through his National Security Adviser, Brent Scowcroft, who re-emerged two years ago as one of the most unabashed and difficult-to-dismiss critics of the buildup to war in Iraq. Democrats once viewed Scowcroft as the champion of an amoral and

shortsighted foreign policy that sacrificed American values in order to achieve stable relations with great powers and avoid trouble in hot spots like the Balkans (a view, incidentally, shared by many of the neoconservatives who surround the current President). It was Scowcroft who secretly traveled to Beijing shortly after the Tiananmen Square massacre to reassure the Chinese that government-to-government relations needn't suffer despite the bipartisan indignation of the American public. But in 2002, lacking a consistent criticism of the drive toward war, many Democrats eagerly took shelter in Scowcroft's high-profile opposition.

Wondering how he would take it, I said to Feldman, "What you're describing to me sounds a lot like what I'd expect from Brent Scowcroft."

"Yes," he said. "I think a lot of what you'd see from a Kerry Administration might be like that. I think there'd be a lot of similarities." When I later made the same suggestion to Kerry's chief foreign-policy adviser, Rand Beers, he agreed.

John Kerry has yet to flesh out his positions on many key foreign-policy questions. But he has nonetheless provided clues—through his speeches, public statements, and choice of advisers—to how he would govern if elected. What's more, it's not difficult to identify the people he would be likely to rely on in the area of foreign policy—they're a close-knit group, many of them veterans of the Clinton Administration. During the spring I interviewed a wide range of people who are in the running for roles in a Kerry Administration, including such probable candidates for Secretary of State as Senator Joseph Biden and Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, current Kerry advisers such as Jonathan Winer and Rand Beers, and many of the lower-level bureaucrats and congressional staffers who would fill out the foreign-policy apparatus of a new Democratic Administration.

Joshua Micah Marshall is the editor of the Web log Talking Points Memo and a contributing writer for The Washington Monthly.

Last December, Kerry delivered a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations titled "Making America Secure Again," in which he declared, "Those of us who seek the Democratic presidential nomination owe the American people

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more than just anger, more than just criticisms of the Bush policy, or even piecemeal solutions. We need to convince America that we Democrats are responsible stewards of our national security and of America's role in the world."

As a Democrat trying to unseat a Republican in time of war, Kerry faces a historic challenge. In the period after Vietnam the Democratic Party became a house divided against itself, with an articulate and energetic dovish base battling a diffuse but larger Cold War constituency. This had two effects. First, it created a poisonous dynamic whereby Democratic politicians came to approach national-security policy less in substantive than in tactical terms—searching for the sweet spot of political safety or attempting to dispense with national security as quickly as possible in order to move on to matters with which they were more comfortable. Over the years this habit of reflexively adopting the politically expedient position sent voters a clear message: many Democratic politicians were just not serious about national security. The second effect was to cede the ideological and intellectual battlefield to Republicans. In the post-Cold War era Republicans developed a foreign-policy vision based on the notion that America should aggressively assert itself abroad, and in which the problem of Saddam Hussein became an *idée fixe*.

These twin perceptions—of Democratic feebleness and Republican assuredness—combined to devastating effect in the 2002 elections. Democrats were trounced, and President Bush seemed unstoppable. But as conditions in Iraq have grown steadily worse, the terrain has shifted. What voters once viewed as the President's steely resolve many now see as stubbornness, which has led to skepticism about his practical know-how and ability to carry out the mission of stabilizing and democratizing Iraq. Against this backdrop Kerry's foreign policy could prove attractive.

Democratic foreign-policy hands tend to be less ideologically driven than Republican ones. Their strengths lean toward technocratic expertise and procedural competence rather than theories and grand visions. This lack of partisan edge is best illustrated by the fact that two of Kerry's top advisers served on Bush's National Security Council staff as recently as last year (Beers as senior director for counterterrorism, and Flynt Leverett as senior director for Middle East initiatives). The team that advised candidate Bush in 1999 and 2000—the so-called "Vulcans"—was practically the mirror opposite of the Kerry team. Though all its members had served at least one stint in government, most had held political appointments rather than working for decades in the security bureaucracy, as Beers did. And whereas Kerry's team is the embodiment of the nation's professional national-security apparatus, key members of Bush's team, such as Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz, had spent entire careers trying to overthrow it.

In a telling sign of the parties' differences on foreign policy, discussion of the next Secretary of State is rampant

among Democrats. (The issue of who would run the Pentagon—more of a power base in Republican Administrations, particularly this one—is a subject of much less debate.) Speculation focuses primarily on Richard Holbrooke, Clinton's former ambassador to the United Nations, who gained fame and no little notoriety for his peacemaking efforts in Bosnia; and Joseph Biden, a former chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who remains its senior Democratic member. Both men are stars in the somewhat gray firmament of Democratic foreign policy; both boast outsize personalities and loyal followings; and the two scarcely differ in their approach to the major foreign-policy issues of the moment.

Other key appointments would most likely be filled by the advisers who have surrounded Kerry since he launched his bid for the nomination. Rand Beers is often touted as a Democratic successor to Condoleezza Rice; he functioned as the equivalent of a National Security Adviser to Kerry throughout the primaries, crafting many of his policy positions. Others who figure prominently are Nancy Stetson, the chief foreign-policy adviser on Kerry's Senate staff, and Jonathan Winer, a longtime aide who specialized in international money laundering and terrorist financial networks for Kerry in the 1980s and early 1990s, and later in Clinton's State Department.

Kerry's advisers focus less exclusively than Bush's on rogue nation-states. They focus more on the host of diffuse dangers that have arisen in the wake of globalization: destabilization, arms smuggling, terrorism.

A number of former Clinton officials, turned out by Bush's victory, would probably return to fill additional positions in a Kerry Administration. Some likely candidates are Ron Asmus (a State Department veteran and a possible assistant secretary of state for Europe), Jamie Rubin (Madeleine Albright's chief spokesman at the State Department), and several notable veterans of Clinton's National Security Council staff, including James Steinberg, Ivo Daalder, and Kenneth Pollack. Although some divisions exist among them (Daalder was an adviser to Howard Dean, for instance), these veterans tend to take a more hawkish approach to foreign policy than most professional Democrats of the post-Vietnam generation and even many current Democratic voters. Pollack is the author of *The Threatening Storm*, an influential book that argued for regime change in Iraq and was frequently cited by Republicans during the buildup to the invasion. Late last year, when Howard Dean was the front-runner, Pollack, Asmus, and another key Kerry adviser—the former State Department official Greg Craig—

signed a manifesto titled "Progressive Internationalism: A Democratic National Security Strategy," which aimed to put the Democratic foreign-policy establishment on record against Dean's perceived slide toward the party's dovish past.

Over the course of Clinton's presidency, especially during his second term, the President's foreign-policy team crafted a new vision of how America should engage with the post-Cold War world. Because this process got into gear well before 9/11, when the world was less keenly attuned to lofty questions of foreign policy, their vision received far less attention than the high-octane theorizing of Wolfowitz, Dick Cheney, and the neocons before and



after the attacks. Nevertheless, it offers a road map to the probable overall direction of a Kerry Administration—one that might surprise people familiar with Kerry only through his relentless criticism of Bush on the campaign trail. These ex-Clintonites are quite comfortable with the use of force, and actually agree with the Bush Administration on some key goals—for instance, exporting democracy and political liberalization—though they differ significantly on how they would pursue them. They also differ on the question of where the true threats to America lie and how to combat them. Kerry's advisers focus less exclusively on nation-states like those Bush identified in his infamous "Axis of Evil" speech and more on the host of diffuse dangers that have arisen in the wake of globalization: destabilization, arms smuggling, and terrorism.

As the situation in Iraq has worsened, Kerry has stepped up his criticism of the Bush Administration. In an April 30 speech at Westminster College, Kerry laid out a three-part plan for the occupation and reconstruction of the country. First he would expand and internationalize the security force by seeking the support of the UK, France, Russia, and China, and also NATO, which, he suggested, might take control of the borders and train Iraq's army. Second he would propose an international high commissioner to oversee elections, write a constitution, and organize the reconstruction efforts. Third he would launch a "massive training effort" to expand Iraqi security forces. Taking those steps, Kerry declared, "is the only way to succeed in the mission while ending the sense of an American occupation." On the surface this may sound like merely a difference of emphasis—as though the only change Kerry proposes is a dash more multilateralism and UN involvement. But beyond specifics, the significance of which can be misinterpreted, lies a fundamental difference in world view between Democrats and Republicans—a difference in how they see the nature of the threat facing America. This, more than any distinction between hawk and dove, is also the fundamental foreign-policy difference between Bush and Kerry.

From its inception the Bush Administration has viewed states as the key actors on the world stage, and relations among them as the primary concern of U.S. foreign policy. It is a mindset rooted in the realities of the Cold War, which defined U.S. foreign policy at the time when most of the President's key advisers gained their formative experience in government. The fixity of this mindset also explains why the Bush Administration spent its first months so heavily focused on the issue of national missile defense, and seemed so surprised by al-Qaeda's transnational terrorism. The Bush team didn't discount the problem of weapons of mass destruction; it simply expected trouble to come from an ICBM-wielding "rogue state" like Iraq or North Korea, rather than from Islamic terrorist groups.

Viewed through this lens, the Administration's fixation on Iraq after 9/11 becomes somewhat easier to understand. As Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith explained to Nicholas Lemann, of *The New Yorker*, on the eve of the Iraq War, "One of the principal strategic thoughts underlying our strategy in the war on terrorism is the importance of the connection between terrorist organizations and their state sponsors. Terrorist organizations cannot be effective in sustaining themselves over long periods of time to do large-scale operations if they don't have support from states."

To the Democrats in Kerry's orbit, this approach is at best inefficient and at worst akin to fighting fire with gasoline—for example, it has created terrorism in Iraq where little or none

previously existed. Last fall, when I asked the presidential candidate General Wesley Clark about Feith's characterization of the threat, he said it was the "principal strategic *mistake* behind the Administration's policy." Clark went on, "If you look at all the states that were named as the principal adversaries, they're on the periphery of international terrorism today."

First as a military negotiator in Bosnia and later as NATO Supreme Allied Commander in Europe during the second Clinton Administration, Clark was one of the figures at the center of the process that shaped current Democratic foreign-policy views. In its early years, rhetoric aside, the Clinton Administration hewed closely to George H.W. Bush's policy of studied non-involvement in the Balkans, even as Yugoslavia slid into chaos. But over time that region became a forcing ground for re-evaluating Democratic beliefs about foreign policy. The Balkans proved that soft-sounding concerns like human-rights abuses, ethnic slaughter, lawlessness, and ideological extremism could quickly mount into first-order geopolitical crises.

By the mid-1990s this had led the Clinton Administration to focus on terrorism, failed states, and weapons proliferation, and as it did, its foreign-policy outlook changed. The key threats to the United States came to be seen less in terms of traditional conflicts between states and more in terms of endemic regional turmoil of the sort found in the Balkans. "The Clinton Administration," says Jonathan Winer, "started out with a very traditional Democratic or even mainstream approach to foreign policy: big-power politics, Russia being in the most important role; a critical relationship with China; European cooperation; and some multilateralism." But over the years, he went on, "they moved much more to a failed-state, global-affairs kind of approach, recognizing that the trends established by globalization required you to think about foreign policy in a more synthetic

and integrated fashion than nation-state to nation-state."

As Winer argues, the threats were less from Russia or China, or even from the rogue states, than from the breakdown of sovereignty and authority in a broad geographic arc that stretched from West Africa through the Middle East, down through the lands of Islam, and into Southeast Asia. In this part of the world poverty, disease, ignorance, fanaticism, and autocracy frequently combined in a self-reinforcing tangle, fostering constant turmoil. Home to many failed or failing states, this area bred money laundering, waves of refugees, drug production, gunrunning, and terrorist networks—the cancers of the twenty-first-century world order.

In the Balkans, Holbrooke, Clark, and other leading figures found themselves confronting problems that required not only American military force but also a careful synthesis of armed power, peacekeeping capacity, international institutions, and nongovernmental organizations to stabilize the region and maintain some kind of order. Though the former Yugoslavia has continued to experience strife, the settlement in the Balkans remains the most successful one in recent memory, and offers the model on which a Kerry Administration would probably build. As Holbrooke told me, the Bush Administration's actions in Iraq have shown that the Administration understands only the military component of this model: "Most of them don't have a real understanding of what it takes to do nation-building, which is an important part of the overall democratic process."

A key assumption shared by almost all Democratic foreign-policy hands is that by themselves the violent overthrow of a government and the initiation of radical change from above almost never foster democracy, an expanded civil society, or greater openness. "If you have too much change too quickly," Winer says, "you have violence and repression. We don't want to see violence and repression in [the Middle East]. We want to see a greater zone for civilization—a greater zone for personal and private-sector activity and for governmental activity that is not an enactment of violence." Bush and his advisers have spoken eloquently about democratization. But in the view of their Democratic counterparts, their means of pursuing it are plainly counterproductive. It is here, Holbrooke says, that the Administration's alleged belief in the stabilizing role of liberal democracy and open society collides with its belief in the need to rule by force and, if necessary, violence: "The neoconservatives and the conservatives—and they both exist in uneasy tension within this Administration—shift unpredictably between advocacy of democratization and advocacy of neo-imperialism without any coherent intellectual position, except the importance of the use of force."

Because Afghanistan was the Bush Administration's first order of business following the 9/11 attacks, the results of this policy have advanced the furthest there. And because Kerry is on record as saying he would increase the number of U.S. and allied troops in Afghanistan, it's probably the clearest measure of how a Kerry Administration would differ from Bush's.

DENIAL

A black umbrella furled
in deepest mourning waits
in the hall, tears
drying on its shoulders.

None of us will claim it
when we depart, swearing
we have another
just like it at home.

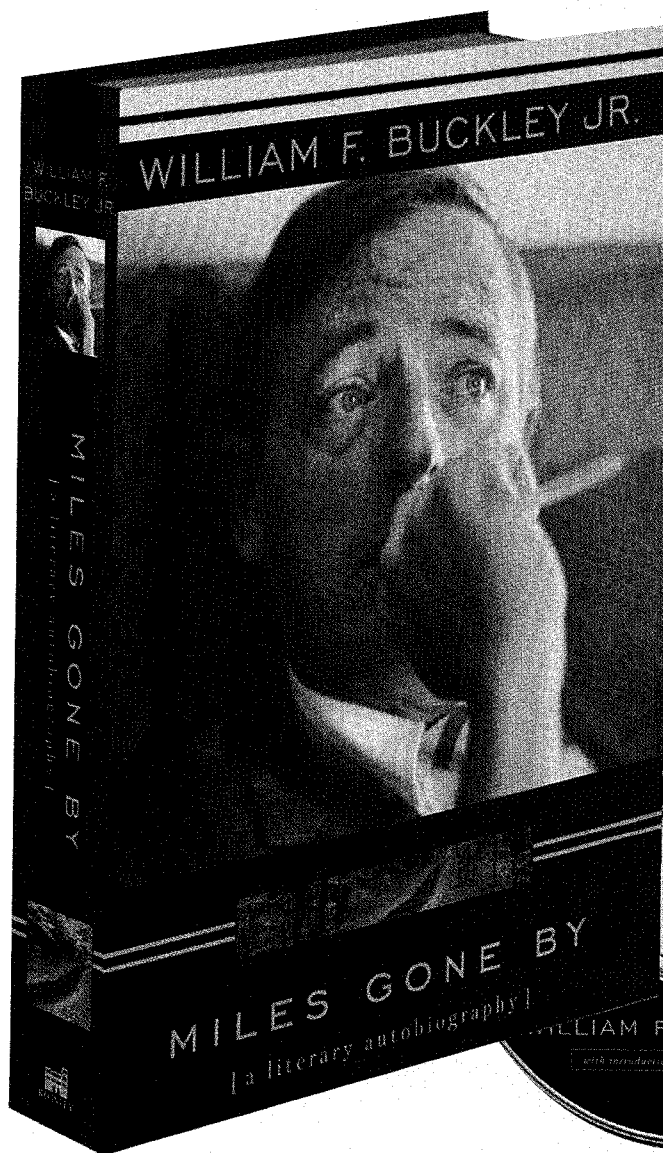
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Leonard Nathan is the author of several volumes of poems and translations, including Tears of the Old Magician (2003).

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Afghanistan is a subject that Kerry's advisers and other senior Democrats turn to again and again. When I interviewed Joseph Biden in late March, he recounted a conversation he'd had with Condoleezza Rice in the spring of 2002 about the growing instability that had taken hold after the Taliban was defeated, in late 2001. Biden told Rice he believed that the United States was on the verge of squandering its military victory by allowing the country to slip back into the corruption, tyranny, and chaos that had originally paved the way for Taliban rule. Rice was uncomprehending. "What do you mean?" he remembers her asking. Biden pointed to the re-emergence in western Afghanistan of Ismail Khan, the pre-Taliban warlord in Herat who quickly reclaimed power after the American victory. He told me: "She said, 'Look, al-Qaeda's not there. The Taliban's not there. There's security there.' I said, 'You mean turning it over to the warlords?' She said, 'Yeah, it's always been that way.'"

"The neoconservatives," says Richard Holbrooke, "shift unpredictably between advocacy of democratization and advocacy of neo-imperialism without any coherent intellectual position, except the importance of the use of force."

Biden was seeking to illustrate the blind spot that Democratic foreign-policy types see in Bush officials like Rice, who believe that if a rogue state has been rid of its hostile government (in this case the Taliban), its threat has therefore been neutralized. Democrats see Afghanistan as an affirmation of their own view of modern terrorism. As Fareed Zakaria noted recently in *Newsweek*, the Taliban regime was not so much a state sponsoring and directing a terrorist organization (the Republican view) as a terrorist organization sponsoring, guiding, and even hijacking a state (the Democratic view). Overthrowing regimes like that is at best only the first step in denying safe haven to al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. Equally important is creating the institutional bases of stability and liberalization that will prevent another descent into lawlessness and terror—in a word, nation-building.

This marriage of power and values is the essence of the foreign-policy vision espoused by leading Democratic thinkers. Out of political caution Kerry's campaign advisers still tend to seek the safety of a Scowcroftian middle ground, but the foreign-policy advisers who would serve President Kerry have quite a different vision—much more ambitious and expansive than anything pursued by the first Bush Administration. In my interviews with the people

around Kerry, it became clear how this Democratic world view would apply to some of the major problem areas in the world. For example, Kerry Democrats do not believe that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the cause of Middle East instability and extremism. But they do believe that almost nothing the United States does to liberalize and pacify the region can have much chance of success so long as the standoff on the West Bank remains unresolved.

This is another area of disagreement between Bush and Kerry. Before the war Bush Administration hawks said that the road to Middle East peace ran through Baghdad. They meant that deposing Saddam Hussein would ease negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This claim was based on three beliefs: that ousting Saddam would remove a threat to the Israelis, making them more willing to accommodate; that regime change in Iraq would deprive Palestinians of a potential ally; and that building a modern democracy in the heart of the Middle East would blunt persistent doubts about U.S. intentions—doubts that had hampered previous efforts. Today that vision looks increasingly improbable, and Kerry's team believes it is deeply misguided.

The Kerry team's plan for handling the looming crises in North Korea and Iran is similarly distinct from the Bush Administration's, principally in its willingness to seek a negotiated settlement in each case. Whether such settlements can be achieved is debatable. But the approach is a marked departure from that of the Bush Administration, which has been unwilling to negotiate with the North Koreans but equally unwilling to risk using force—the only serious alternative to some sort of agreement.

On Iraq, Kerry's policy is more obscure, in part because, as his advisers point out, they simply don't know what the country will look like next January—and the possibilities are becoming ever more limited in light of the worsening state of affairs there. But Kerry's top advisers make clear that their main priorities would be internationalizing the occupation and adopting a broader regional approach to stabilizing the country. As the situation deteriorated throughout the spring, Bush grudgingly embraced several policy alternatives long advocated by his critics, including Kerry—such as increasing the number of troops in the country and creating a substantially larger role for the United Nations. But Kerry's advisers argue that the Bush team is simply too invested in ideology and too compromised by its mistakes in Iraq ever to truly make the right decisions. Some allies simply distrust the Administration too much to lend a hand. Only a new Administration, they argue, can make the clean break that America needs in Iraq.

Polls show that the public's faith in Bush's ability to manage foreign policy has dropped precipitously over the past year, and that more voters now oppose his Iraq policy than support it. With the economy stuck in an ambiguous middle ground, it seems likelier than ever that this election will turn on whether Kerry can convince voters that he offers a credible foreign-policy alternative. ■

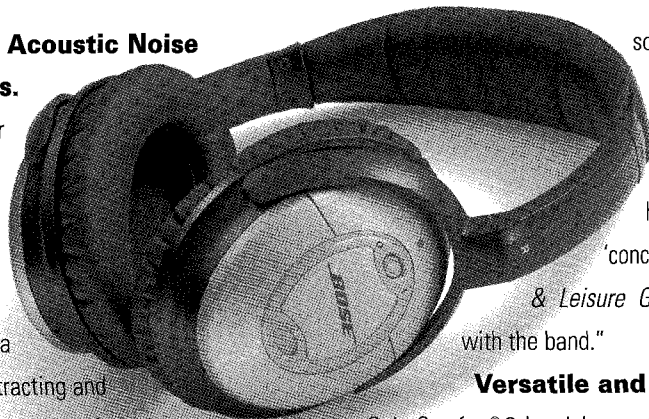
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FIVE DAYS IN FALLUJAH

Since the beginning of spring Fallujah has been at the heart of U.S. military preoccupations in Iraq. Our correspondent accompanied the first unit of Marines to assault the city after the murder and mutilation last April of four American civilians. He filed this report

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

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On March 31 two SUVs carrying four American contractors were ambushed in the Iraqi city of Fallujah, west of Baghdad, in the Sunni Triangle. The vehicles were blasted with small-arms fire and set alight. Frenzied crowds dragged the burned bodies of the contractors through the streets. Two of the four were hung from a nearby bridge. Some of the body parts were cut off with shovels. Headlines in the United States compared the incident to the killing of Americans in Mogadishu, Somalia, eleven years before.

I had been living with the 1st Battalion of the 5th Marine Regiment, or "1/5," in Iraq for several weeks when this incident occurred; I had traveled with the battalion as it moved overland from Kuwait north to the Fallujah region, where it replaced a battalion of the Army's 82nd Airborne Division. There was little talk about the Fallujah killings among 1/5's Marines at FOB (Forward Operating Base) Abu Ghraib, not to be confused with the prison of the same name. They digested the news silently; discerning what the consequences would be for them wasn't difficult.

Indeed, the next day, April 1, 1/5's commander, Lieutenant Colonel Brennan Byrne, a Marine brat who had grown up near Quantico, Virginia, spent many hours behind closed doors at the headquarters of the RCT (Regimental Combat Team) at another, nearby FOB. Captain Jason Eugene Smith, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the Bravo Company commander, quietly pulled me aside in the barracks and told me that 1/5 would be assaulting Fallujah.

The briefing on April 2 at Abu Ghraib's Combat Operations Center was low-key and terrifically businesslike. The taking of a middle-sized city of 285,000 is an amazingly complex affair. Was there enough barbed wire on hand to create makeshift detention facilities? "We need wire, wire, and more wire," Byrne said, "and that means we need lots of stakes and pile drivers." Were there enough interpreters, MREs (Meals Ready to Eat), mineral-

water bottles, ammo, power amps, blue force trackers, and so on? An "ass-load" of refugees was assumed; they would require a whole logistics operation of its own. And how many Marines should be left behind to secure Abu Ghraib in case of an attack? The attack on Fallujah itself was just one of many details to be worked out.

A pattern set in that should not have been surprising but was extraordinary to actually observe: the more apparent it became that the battalion was really going to war, the quieter and more deliberate were the discussions. Marines kept to themselves, busily packing; what gear was taken and what was left behind could determine life or death days from now. People washed and groomed themselves, assuming it would be the last time for quite a while. In the shower I ran into the Navy "doc," Lieutenant Cormac O'Connor, of Indianapolis. He prayed that he wouldn't be busy in the coming weeks, realizing that it was a vain hope.

Power devolved to the head of the "Three Shop," the operations section of the battalion: Major Pete Farnum, of Tipton, Iowa, a tall, rather hulking man whose quietly capable demeanor gave him a particular air of authority. Farnum drove the briefings over the coming days, variations on which would be given to the President of the United States. The assault on Fallujah, born of a political decision taken at the highest levels, would be worked out in detail here at FOB Abu Ghraib, at the nearby headquarters of the RCT, and at the FOB of the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Marine Regiment, "2/1," which would be included in the operation. The headquarters of the RCT was suddenly besieged by men wearing civilian hiking clothes and carrying

either M-4 assault rifles or Glock pistols: Army Special Forces, Delta, the CIA, and other elements that would have pieces of the Marine-led attack on Fallujah.

The process was like writing and performing a symphony; its complexity demanded that the main briefings be "fragg'd out" into smaller

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ones, dealing with different aspects of the task. For example, I attended a meeting dedicated to one matter only: arranging for Navy construction battalions to transport portable bunkers and other equipment for use at the checkpoints to be set up around the city prior to the assault.

All the elements came together fast, owing to a factor largely missing from civilian life: the incontestability of command. Meetings quickly resulted in priorities that in turn quickly led to decisions. As soon as the ranking officer decided on something, the debate moved on to the next point.

"Armies have always been viewed with suspicion in democratic societies because they are the least democratic of all social institutions," the military historian Byron Farwell writes.

They are, in fact, not democratic at all. Governments which have tried to ... blur the distinction between officer and

man have not been successful. Armies stand as disturbing reminders that democratic processes are not always the best, living and perpetual proof that, in at least this one area, the caste system works.

That was certainly true in the planning of the attack on Fallujah.

At the Combat Operations Center the room was packed when Major Farnum delivered his penultimate briefing before 1/5 departed for Fallujah. Among those in attendance were the four infantry "line" captains, who would bear the heaviest personal risk and responsibility for the assault: Captain Philip Treglia, of Elida, Ohio, the Alpha Company commander; Captain Jason Smith, the Bravo Company commander; Captain Wilbert Dickens, of Rich Square, North Carolina, the Charlie Company commander; and Captain Blair Sokol, of Newark, Delaware, the commander of Weapons Company.

Infantry company captains are the universal joints of any Marine ground-fighting battalion. Because the Marine Corps has a flatter, more powered-down hierarchy than the Army, they are the equivalent of the Army's iron majors. Treglia, Smith, Dickens, and Sokol were variations on the same model: terse, intense, driven. Because majors and higher-ranking officers in the Marine Corps are prisoners of staff work, the captains sought to take advantage of their last chance to be in the field with the grunts. These men were determined to prove themselves.

Captain Sokol had been awarded the Bronze Star for valor in OIF-I (Operation Iraqi Freedom) in 2003. He was a towering, taciturn mass of a man who had been a football lineman at the U.S. Naval Academy, in Annapolis. He was also a tactical genius in the making. This time he would remain ever so slightly in the rear, in order to run the other three captains and to deal with "deconfliction" issues.

When three companies assault a city in order to box in the enemy, the biggest danger is often not the enemy itself but friendly fire. And with 5.56mm rounds able to travel several miles before losing velocity, avoiding friendly fire in city streets—and at the same time orchestrating an attack from different directions—requires an uncommon instinct for spatial geometry.

Once more, Farnum went over the basics of the plan. Responsibility for capturing the southern half of Fallujah—the part below a main thoroughfare that the U.S. military had dubbed "Michigan"—would fall to 1/5. The northern half of the city would be taken by 2/1. But because the southern half of Fallujah contained a sparsely populated industrial zone and an adjacent commercial area, both of which could be captured relatively easily, 1/5 would be the first battalion to establish a substantial foothold in the city.

Prior to the assault, nine TCPs (Traffic Control Points) would be set up around Fallujah, preventing the Marines

hoped, insurgents from leaving or entering. Following that, the two battalions would occupy the city's outskirts, using new forward operating bases to prosecute raids on HVTs (High Value Targets). IO (Information Operations) would be tasked with convincing the city's inhabitants that the Marines now represented the "superior tribe" there.

One officer told me, "This is a flash-bang strategy. Stun the bad guys with aggressive fire, then Psy-ops the shit out of them, always coming back to the theme of the inevitability of the superior tribe."

The final stage, Farnum said, would be the handover of the city to the new Iraqi police, the new Iraqi army, and the American-created Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, or ICDC. The Marines listened politely, but I am not sure how many believed this. The ICDC and the Iraqi police in the region were said to be deserting in droves. I had found that the ICDC and the police were loyal where the Americans were

"Gents, let me tell you what this is really about," Lieutenant Colonel Byrne said. "The CG has changed the Op Order from 'capture or kill' the enemy to 'kill or capture.' He wants the emphasis on 'kill.'"

strong and disloyal where they were perceived to be weak. People in all cultures gravitate toward power, and are susceptible to intimidation by thugs and chieftains. But the chieftain mentality is particularly prevalent in Iraq.

As Major Farnum went through his briefing, it dawned on everyone inside the room that Operation Valiant Resolve, as it was code-named, represented the opposite of what the Marines had come to Iraq to do. Instead of nation-building, or what the Marines call SASO (Stability and Security Operations), they were about to lead a theater-level attack on a large urban area, with assistance from the CIA and the Army's Delta Force, 5th Special Forces Group, and the Psy-ops branch of Special Operations Command. Air assets would include Air Force AC-130 spectral gunships, Marine Cobra and UH-1D "Huey" helicopters, unmanned Pioneer surveillance planes, and Air Force F-15s.

Indeed, what the Marines called OIF-II had quite literally become OIF-II—a continuation of the American-led invasion of the previous year. Like Desert Storm, in 1991, Operation Iraqi Freedom had been a relatively painless and dazzling success only because it was incomplete. In both cases victory was declared before a critical part of the operation had even been attempted. In Desert Storm key Republican Guard units had been left intact, allowing the regime to survive. In OIF-I, cities and towns like Fallujah had essen-

tially been by-passed; no serious attempts were made to eradicate pro-regime elements in those places.

This aversion to sustained engagement overseas has led to more carnage rather than less. Americans want clean end states and victory parades. But imperialism is about never-ending involvement. And American officials were in an imperial situation, even if the Bush Administration and the troops themselves, to say nothing of the public, were uncomfortable with the word.

Major Farnum reiterated that Operation Valiant Resolve was not retribution for the butchery of March 31. "It's just that the problem of Fallujah has festered to the point where dealing with it represents a pivot opportunity to improve the atmosphere in the entire AOR [Area of Responsibility]."

He then deferred to Lieutenant Colonel Byrne, who, because of his higher rank and the fact of his command over the battalion, could speak bluntly, in language that was necessary to inspire noncoms for the close-quarters combat to come against hard-core insurgents.

"Gents, let me tell you what this is really about," Byrne said. "It's about killing shitheads." He made reference to the Commanding General, or CG, of the 1st Marine Division, Major General James N. Mattis. Mattis, who constantly drilled humanitarian concerns into his men, nevertheless knew when the time had come for pure aggression. "The CG," Byrne went on, "has changed the Op Order from 'capture or kill' the enemy to 'kill or capture.' He wants the emphasis on 'kill.'"

"You'll be facing interesting folk," Byrne went on. "Guys who fought in Grozny [Chechnya], in Afghanistan, guys who aren't all that interested in giving up. I made everyone grow moustaches for the sake of cultural sensitivity when we left Kuwait. Now I want you all to shave them off. We're going on the offensive."

Byrne stood up, signaling the end of the briefing. Everyone else stood up and shouted, "Ooh-rah!"

Outside, Second Lieutenant David Russell, of San Antonio, Texas, another Naval Academy graduate, spoke a difficult truth: "This is one where we have no idea whether there will be lots of casualties within days, or no one will even shoot at us." The biggest worry was that just one well-placed IED (Improvised Explosive Device) would cause a "cluster fuck," or traffic foul-up, which would in turn facilitate a major ambush of an attacking convoy. Fallujah was the ultimate challenge for which the U.S. military had been studying and prepping since the end of the Cold War. But some high-ranking Marine officers were uncomfortable with that realization. After all, most of the urban-warfare precedents were bad. Mogadishu, Grozny, Jenin—either you were ambushed, as in Mogadishu in 1993; barely won through indiscriminate slaughter, like the Russians in Grozny in the mid-1990s; or won relatively cleanly given the circumstances, like the Israelis in Jenin in 2002, but nowhere near cleanly enough to satisfy world opinion.

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Actually, there was a model to be followed, at least partially: one that Byrne occasionally alluded to, and which harked back to one of the most glorious chapters in Marine history. It was the twenty-six-day battle for Hue, in Vietnam, that began on January 31, 1968, during the Tet Offensive. According to the *Marine Corps Gazette*, Hue bears a connotation no less positive than the battles of Belleau Wood, in France in 1918, and Tarawa, in the central Pacific in 1943.

A former imperial city of the once unified Vietnam, with 140,000 inhabitants, located near the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone), Hue had been stormed by 12,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese regulars. They rounded up South Vietnamese soldiers, government officials, and other American sympathizers, and clubbed or shot to death up to 6,000 of them. American Marines—including 1/5—counterattacked, leading to a month of brutal theater-level urban combat in which primarily three undermanned Marine infantry battalions fought house to house. In taking back the heavily fortified urban center, the Americans killed 5,113 of the enemy and expelled close to 5,000 more, while suffering only 147 killed and 857 wounded—results so lopsided that the victory would have qualified as historic in either of the two world wars.

Fallujah might be like Hue, I thought. As at Hue (and Stalingrad, too), snipers on both sides would provide a force multiplier. And as at Hue, this would be a messy squad-leader's battle, a struggle of privates and corporals rushing from street to street, where the enemy would hide within crowds, firing mortars and rocket-propelled grenades, and mosques would be used as enemy fortresses the same way Buddhist temples had been at Hue. It would be a battle in which a certain percentage of the local inhabitants would sympathize with the insurgents, but the vast majority would flee or lie low, just trying to survive.

More briefings followed, at lower levels of command. Each company captain briefed his staff NCOs on their specific routes and objectives in the city, and on the radio "freeks" and call signs to be used. Briefings were also held on the placement of snipers and heavy guns. The engineers had to decide where to drop dirt and spike strips for the roadblocks. The order of the vehicles in the convoy headed into the battle zone had to be established. By the evening of April 4 the officers and staff NCOs had already gone several days with little sleep, although the operation had not yet begun.

"Stepping time" was scheduled for 1:00 A.M. on April 5. At 7:30 P.M. on April 4 Captain Smith assembled Bravo Company in a V formation in front of the red company flag. He told his 150 Marines that they should be grateful for the opportunity now given them. Then a chaplain, Navy Lieutenant Wayne Hall, of Oklahoma City, blessed Bravo:

"Today is Palm Sunday," he began. "The day of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, where he broke the bounds of



Hell. Tonight commences your triumphal entry into Fallujah, a place in the bounds of Hell. This is a spiritual battle, and you Marines are the tools of mercy." As Hall invoked the Holy Spirit, the Marines all dropped to one knee and bowed their heads, removing their bush or field caps as they did so.

After more than a year of travel with the U.S. military I had become accustomed to such sermons. For young men living in austere conditions, going out daily to risk their lives, morale is based not on polite subtleties but on a stark belief in their own righteousness, and in the iniquity of the enemy. The spirit of the U.S. military is fiercely evangelical, even as it is fiercely ecumenical. Although both kosher and halal MREs are provided, and soldiers and Marines of all races, religions, and regions of the country are welcomed

CRIS BOURNCE/AP/GETTY



into the ranks, the fact is that not all races, religions, and regional types join up in equal numbers. So it is that the martial evangelicalism of the South and the Bible Belt gives the military its true religious soul, along with its compassion for innocent civilians—a phenomenon I had seen in Afghanistan, the Philippines, and other places, and would see again in Fallujah.

I wished Captain Smith good luck, telling him I would link up with Bravo the next day, after accompanying Lieutenant Colonel Byrne to Fallujah's outskirts. Smith's face was glowing with rapture. This was the moment he had lived for. Bravo had been selected to be the tip of the spear for the assault inside the city—just as the Bravo Company of 1/5 had been first inside the citadel of Hue thirty-six years earlier.

By 9:00 P.M. the camp was silent; many Marines had slipped away to take power naps. In the shadows cast by the full moon I noticed scout snipers painting their faces with green cami stick.

A few hours later we “stepped” outside the gate.

The weather had turned cold and windy. The dust of the desert looked like snow in the moonlight. In under an hour the “Renegades” (the platoon that served as Byrne's personal security element, with which I had been traveling for several weeks now) arrived at a point in the desert half a mile outside Fallujah. Here a communications team set up a temporary command post for Byrne. Fallujah was a line of twinkling yellow and bluish lights, from which

the sound of small-arms fire and RPGs could intermittently be heard: Charlie Company, commanded by Captain Dickens, had already made contact with the enemy at a highway cloverleaf outside the city to the east.

It was too cold and cramped in the Humvee for me to sleep. Along with Chief Warrant Officer II David Bednarcik, of Allentown, Pennsylvania; Corporal Daniel Pena, of Waukegan, Illinois; and Lance Corporal Mike Neal, of the South Side of Chicago (my closest friends in the battalion), I listened to news of the cloverleaf engagement on the battalion "tac," the tactical radio frequency, throughout the night. Catnapping in daylight and staying up all night would be a pattern over the coming week. Night fighting favored the Americans, who were outfitted with night-vision goggles, or NVGs. As Byrne had told me, "The bad guys only have what God gave them; we have what Raytheon gave us."

One high-ranking officer told me, "Folks here have been conditioned to seeing the U.S. Army patrol the main roads in large vehicles. We aim to dismount and enter on foot with bayonets."

At dawn, coughing and freezing, I walked over to Byrne's Humvee. He was sitting in the back seat, his head half hidden inside a balaclava, shivering and coated with dust like the rest of us, and listening and talking to three different radio nets at once. Military command is about making split-second executive decisions, the consequences of which might psychologically immobilize your average CEO—and making those decisions during periods of extreme physical discomfort.

The Marines were doing this operation on a shoestring, with two battalions for the first few days when they really required three: Hue, a city with half the population of Fallujah, had been assaulted by nearly three Marine battalions. As I had observed in Afghanistan the previous fall, too many support troops were concentrated near the capital, and too few fighting elements were dispersed throughout the countryside. I had entered a vast chow hall at Camp Victory, the headquarters of the military coalition near the Baghdad International Airport, and seen it teeming with soldiers choosing different kinds of fine cakes for dessert; then I'd traveled in the Iraqi countryside and seen barely a U.S. presence. The military was everywhere burdened by a top-heavy bureaucracy, with too many layers of staff that needed pampering. Thus it was organizationally miscast for dealing with twenty-first-century insurgencies. In both Afghanistan and Iraq the military had set up structures it

was historically comfortable with—not structures particularly suited for the challenge at hand.

I spent the first half of April 5 touring various traffic checkpoints around Fallujah with Byrne, and listening to casualty reports (eight men had been wounded so far). In midafternoon regimental and division commanders powwowed with Byrne and his company captains alongside his Humvee in the desert.

It was decided that when Bravo Company penetrated the city, with Alpha and Charlie, and the three fanned out in different directions in the industrial zone of southeastern Fallujah, the Marines would affix bayonets to their M-16 assault rifles. The point was mainly psychological—to show the people of the city that the Marines truly meant business. As one high-ranking officer told me, "Folks here have been conditioned to seeing the U.S. Army patrol the main roads in large vehicles. We aim to dismount and enter on foot with bayonets."

After the division and regimental commanders left, Byrne and his captains went over the radio call signs: "Geronimo" for the lieutenant colonel and the Renegades, "Apache" for Alpha Company, "Blackhawk" for Bravo, "Red Cloud" for a platoon from Weapons Company that would assist Alpha and Bravo, "Little Wolf" and "Crazy Horse" for two countermechanized units, and so on.

As the sun set and word came from Charlie Company of three men killed in action by the cloverleaf, I said good-bye to Byrne and walked with Captain Smith a few hundred yards to where Bravo Company was assembling for the night attack.

Smith briefed his lieutenants and staff NCOs before conducting communications rehearsals. A few of them lit cigars and had a smoke together before dispersing to their various Humvees and seven-tons, spread out in a long line. Smith handed me over to Second Lieutenant Joshua Palmer, of Banning, California, who escorted me to the seven-ton in which I would be riding.

Palmer was a polished, particularly well-spoken and well-read college graduate in his early twenties, who had joined the Corps out of a true sense of idealism. He talked easily with his men, who had not the education he had, quietly inspiring them. Palmer was the picture of contentment that evening. He and I sat together in the front of the seven-ton, talking about books and listening to the sounds of rockets and mortars above the drone of the truck engine, trying to forget how cold we were. Fallujah lay less than half a mile away.

At midnight the trucks began to move, zigzagging without lights to avoid mortar hits as they crossed the short patch of desert to where the city streets began. In a moment we were outside the soft-drink factory that satellite photos and other intel had indicated would make a suitable FOB for Byrne and 1/5. Immediately Bravo began rounding up temporary prisoners of war, known as PUCs (for "persons under control"), including some Sudanese nationals. But the factory was taken without a fight.

Byrne soon arrived to take command of his new FOB, a sprawling cluster of one-story buildings protected by an outer wall. With him was Colonel John Toolan, of Brooklyn, the commander of the Regimental Combat Team. Toolan tried to inspect the area to the east of the compound, but his up-armored Humvee immediately came under intense bombardment, which was silenced by the guns of a circling AC-130 called in by a forward air controller on the ground. All this happened within the space of a few minutes.

I found Smith just as he began to lead Bravo deeper into the city on foot. Streets and buildings were blacked out. Marines spread into alleys under the moonlight, as mortars and rockets sounded in the northern part of the city, a half mile away, where we could see tracers.

It was organized confusion, as Smith kept trying to ascertain the boundary seams between Bravo and Alpha, behind us and directly to the south. Against a surrealistic urban landscape of howling stray dogs and the sand-encrusted remains of rusty automobiles and cement mixers, Marines in their desert camis crouched motionless at every intersection, like so many gray boulders, peering through NVGs, their rifles covering their designated fields of fire.

Smith's forward contingent of Bravo moved out of the industrial zone and into an area of low-end stores. Yet the whole of Fallujah still looked like one big automobile chop shop. Just before dawn, when the call to prayer sounded from nearby mosques, we reached Michigan, the broad thoroughfare that marked the northern edge of 1/5's responsibility.

Smith immediately began ordering his Marines onto rooftops; he wanted "guardian angels" everywhere when daylight arrived. Because there was a shortage of lightweight portable ladders, the Marines had to scramble and climb over one another's shoulders.

Smith; his first sergeant, Scott Van De Ven, of Grayling, Michigan; a radio operator, Lance Corporal Joseph Hedrick; and I climbed onto a roof, only to find that rather than the flat, empty space we had anticipated, it and every other roof nearby were cluttered with rusty old mufflers and tailpipes—to such an extent that we all had to pitch in and make space just to lie down and rest, in shifts. I managed an hour's sleep. I used one of the rusty mufflers as a pillow, and awoke covered in filth. I looked around in broad daylight to see the roofscape of Fallujah, littered with thousands upon thousands of old mufflers and tailpipes, guarded by U.S. Marines standing atop this part of the city with fixed bayonets.

Mosques and factories loomed in the distance. It was ugly: the classic terrain of radicalism, occupied by the lumpen faithful. Islamic radicalism needs to be distinguished from Islamic conservatism. Conservatism signifies tradition, with a high degree of aesthetics—notably represented by the venerable royal courts of Morocco, Jordan, and the Gulf states. But radicalism germinates from a break in tradition, when the House of Islam finds itself amid the

alienating anonymity of early Industrial Age slums, where tradition can be resurrected only by reinventing religion in an abstract, ideological form. Fallujah looked like what it was—a nasty place. Its decrepit factories had a Cold War, Eastern-bloc aspect to them.

Van De Ven began calling over the ICOM intra-squad radio for water, chow, and radio batteries. Smith had other concerns: the Marines were too sparsely spread out at intersections and on the rooftops, and suspicious late-model cars had begun prowling the area. The bad guys were casing our locations. Over the ICOM and the battalion "tac" Smith immediately demanded the establishment of roadblocks. The empty streets and closed shops were signs that we would soon be attacked.

It was maddening the way the enemy, along with the local population at large, could gather information about us so quickly. British Army Colonel C. E. Callwell, an observer of guerrilla warfare at the end of the nineteenth century, wrote that the enemy is helped by a system of intelligence that seems to arise from the soil itself: "News spreads in a most mysterious fashion. The people are far more observant than the dwellers in civilized lands. By a kind of instinct they interpret military portents ... and it flies from mouth to mouth till it reaches the ears of the hostile leaders."

Smith ordered his Marines off the rooftops and to new locations. He and his men broke into an automobile repair shop, where Bravo established a forward headquarters position. Stripped-down MREs and water soon arrived by truck.

I had just poured water into the heating filter for a Captain Country Chicken MRE, and was preparing to remove some layers of clothing beneath my flak vest (the weather had turned hot after the freezing night), when RPG and small-arms fire rattled the scrap iron that formed the roof of the filthy garage headquarters.

The fire directed at us did not let up. Over the ICOM, Smith learned that it was coming from a mosque on Michigan about 300 yards away. The mosque was promptly targeted for a possible air strike, and everyone began a fast march toward it.

Smith did not have to order his Marines straight into the direction of the fire; it was a collective impulse—a phenomenon I would see again and again over the coming days. The idea that Marines are trained to break down doors, to seize beachheads and other territory, was an abstraction until I was there to experience it. Running into fire rather than seeking cover from it goes counter to every human survival instinct—trust me. I was sweating as much from fear as from the layers of clothing I still had on from the night before, to the degree that it felt as if pure salt were running into my eyes from my forehead. As the weeks had rolled on, and I had gotten to know the 1/5 Marines as the individuals they were, I had started deluding myself that they weren't much different from me. They had soft spots, they got sick, they complained. But in one flash, as we charged across Michigan amid whistling incoming shots,



I realized that they were not like me; they were Marines.

We ran through several residential lots until we were just outside the gates of the mosque. It had a Persian-style blue dome, though it was Sunni. Then the firing stopped. One of Smith's corporals, Robert Dawson, of Staten Island, led an assault squad of nine Marines into the mosque. His men detained two people and found some arms, but most of the gunmen (whom local kids called "Ali Babas") had fled just as the Marines were closing in on it.

"I want to IO the shit out of this place tomorrow," Smith said, referring to Information Operations—dropping leaflets, painting graffiti. The point was "to let them know that if they flagrantly use mosques for offensive operations, their mosques lose their protected status."

Directly across the street from the mosque, on the southern side of Michigan, was an apartment building that the Marines had suspected was used to fire on them. Consequently they had searched it, and had ordered a large family with children and babies into the courtyard. Smith approached the male head of the family to apologize, and stood erect except for a slight hunch in his shoulders, his hands deep in his pockets—a position I would often see him take when he was deciding, thinking, or about to say something important. He stared unblinkingly at the man.

It was sometimes hard to imagine anyone more serious and intense than Captain Jason Smith. Yet there was a courtly quality about him too. I thought of a Confederate officer. Through his Iraqi interpreter Smith told the man, "Sir, we are truly sorry that we had to ask your family to leave the building. You can all go back in now. We will compensate you for the inconvenience. We are United States Marines, a different breed than you are used to. We do not take kindly

to people shooting at us. If you have any information about the Ali Babas, please share it with us. If you know any of the Ali Babas personally, please tell them to attack us as quickly as possible, so that we may kill them and start repairing sewers, electricity, and other services in your city."

After the translation was complete, the man, looking dumbfounded, gripped Smith's hand and wouldn't let go. Smith wasn't kidding about the compensation. Byrne had been given a hoard of ready cash to use as he saw fit in order to win allies in the city.

Walking back to the garage across an open space, we were attacked by an RPG and an intense barrage of small-arms fire. We ran for cover and crouched against a building. Then we saw a body in the street. Amid the chaos a Marine had killed an Iraqi civilian who was suspiciously running away. Smith got angry at the Marine. "Did he have a weapon? No! So where in the ROEs [Rules of Engagement] does it say you can shoot at him?" Everyone now became somber. I felt bad for the Marine who had fired the shot—any civilian who experienced the complexity and confusion of this urban battle space, and the split-second, life-or-death decisions required, would have felt bad for him. Another luxury car passed, tracking our movement. "It's like trying to grab a fist full of water," Smith remarked, looking at the car.

Back at the garage Smith took out a packet of instant-coffee powder and poured it dry on his tongue, chasing it down with mineral water. Then he conducted a debriefing.

Before long we were attacked again by RPGs, mortar, and small arms. Again, everyone moved in the direction of the fire. This time it was two blocks to the north on Michigan. The crack of rifle fire can be a good sound: it often means outgoing, and when not usually means the fire is a

NICOLAS ASFOURI/AFP/GETTY

safe distance away. The whistle and swish of bullets is bad: it usually means incoming and close by. Running down a back street with one of Smith's lieutenants, I heard a whistle and swish. Both of us jumped into a sewer ditch.

This firefight, like the previous one, lasted more than an hour, though both seemed much longer. On a few occasions I caught glimpses of the Ali Babas—in black pajamas and sometimes in fedayeen-style kaffiyehs—who were shooting at us. The combat was that close.

There was no sweeter sound than the drone of the AC-130 overhead: help was on the way. Then came the thudding, drilling noise of its guns—help itself. I thought of the two forward air controllers—Captains Chris Graham, of Miami, Florida, and Don Mareska, of Moscow, Idaho, two friendly, back-slapping pilots—who only a few weeks before had been downcast with me over the fact that in this nation-building environment they wouldn't have the opportunity to use their skills. They still weren't flying, but now, calling in air strikes, they were the stars of the show. (Mareska would be slightly wounded in the leg the next day.)

The AC-130 is a magnificent asset, an attack cargo plane designed to fly for hours at a time above the battlefield, carrying tens of thousands of pounds of ammo for its 25mm and 40mm guns. Because it can linger so long, its crew can examine the battle space, talk to the forward air controllers on the ground, and be intimately involved in the fight. Its crew has what the crews of fighter jets lack: situational, smell-of-the-battlefield awareness.

The AC-130 was one of the few advantages the Marines had. Almost all the fire and explosions I heard were incoming. The Ali Babas could fire indiscriminately and blame collateral damage on the Americans, whereas the Americans picked and chose their shots carefully. There was zero tolerance for civilian casualties, though it was impossible to meet the standard always.

I hadn't been back at the garage for more than half an hour before the third sustained and intense firefight of the day commenced. Two Marines were wounded. I rode with them in the Humvee-truck back to the soft-drink factory. The truck got stuck for a moment crossing Michigan, which had become a free-fire zone. A hail of bullets descended on us. Luckily the side panels were up-armored. I lay flat on my stomach.

Through all the attacks that day, April 6, Bravo Company had gradually advanced deeper into the city. There was nothing fancy about this; the Marines slugged it out three steps forward, two steps back. This was the classic, immemorial labor of infantry, little changed since antiquity. Commanders inserted grunts and waited for them to be attacked, using the opportunity to break the enemy over the contact line.

Back at the factory I learned that there were still no units available to relieve Bravo. Captain Smith's Marines would have to fight on with little sleep. I thought of those throngs of soldiers at Camp Victory.

The Renegades had their Humvees outside the walls of the FOB, guarding it against attack. Since there was no running water for a shower, soon after I returned I went outside the perimeter to visit with Bednarcik, Pena, and Neal. "Sit here with us for a while and relax," one of them said from their Humvee. Just then a 122mm rocket landed fifty feet away.

As with gunfire, the thud of an explosion can be a good sound—meaning it missed you. But the swoosh of an incoming rocket means *Oh shit, it's over*, as you cower in the longest split second you'll ever know. That's the sound we heard. The Humvee rocked; fortunately, it was up-armored.

For weeks I had lived with periodic rocket and mortar fire. It was maddening, because you had absolutely no control over your destiny, whereas in firefights you could run, duck, hug a wall, or dive into a ditch. Rocket and mortar attacks represented the utter randomness of life compressed beyond all imagining, with devastating, unalterable consequences. At FOB Fallujah, the headquarters of the Regimental Combat Team, a Navy doc had been killed by a mortar while talking with his father on a cell phone. At the cloverleaf a rocket that had traveled almost ten miles killed a man who would have gotten away practically unscathed had it landed a few feet away, on the other side of a blast barrier. Should you walk to the chow hall or port-a-john in this direction, or that? The decision might determine whether you lived or died.

I walked from the Humvee back into the FOB, found a small storeroom that smelled like cat shit, and opened my sleeping bag. Still in my flak jacket, I went to sleep on the cement floor, using my helmet as a pillow. I slept soundly for a few hours.

The next day, as rocket and mortar fire rained intermittently near the FOB, we got a visit from twelve stars' worth of Marine generals: Major General Jim Mattis (two stars), Lieutenant General Jan Huly (three stars), Lieutenant General James Conway (three stars), and General Michael Hagee (four stars). Hagee was the Marine Corps commandant, one of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He had traveled to the FOB from Washington with Lieutenant General Huly, the director of Marine operations worldwide. Conway was the commander of the First Marine Expeditionary Force, or I MEF, and Mattis the 1st Division commander. It said something for the Marine Corps that the commandant would come all the way from Washington to what one officer termed "this shithole." (Conditions at the soda factory would improve to the point where journalists would describe it as "relatively luxurious.") Corporal Nicholas Magdalin, of Chicago, a Renegade who happened to be nearby when the generals' armored vehicles rolled in, had his picture taken with them. "Even if I am killed tomorrow, my life is now complete," he told me in disbelief.

The four generals, along with Colonel Toolan, the Reg-

imental Combat Team commander, pored over a satellite map of Fallujah, which they spread out on the hood of a Humvee. The plan was for 2/1 to come down from the northern part of the city, and 1/5 to move in from the south and east, in order to box the insurgents against the Euphrates, which flowed north to south along the city's western edge. Among the bad news was the following:

- There was no such thing as a friendly mosque in the city; they were all storage depots for explosives, and their roofs and minarets were being used by gunmen.
- Members of the American-trained ICDC in the area were not only deserting but also cooperating with those inside the mosques.
- The plan for taking down the city was realistic militarily, but politics in the form of ceasefires threatened to intrude.

What the Marines really had going for them was their warrior spirit and a matter-of-fact willingness to die, if circumstances demanded. It was never spoken of; it was simply there. Concomitantly, they had stores of compassion. The two occasions when I had seen the Marines of 1/5 most depressed in Fallujah were when the civilian was accidentally shot in the firefight next to the mosque, and when a six-year-old girl was killed by a mortar that missed the FOB and hit a nearby house. The number of KIAs in the battalion had by then reached half a dozen, and the wounded had crept up into the dozens. One of those killed was Joshua Palmer, with whom I had sat discussing books the night prior to the assault. He had been shot in the neck and abdomen while leading his platoon into a house from which the Marines were taking fire. He had been promoted to first lieutenant two days before, but in his typical understated manner kept the news to himself. He has been recommended for the Navy Cross.

I went out into the city to see Captain Smith several times. As Bravo advanced westward, the forward headquarters moved from the garage to a small warehouse with hardened cement walls. Smith directed a Bravo platoon to the "905-degree grid," a few blocks to the west. Fallujah had been transformed into an American urban space. Points on the map were identified not by local landmarks but by their GPS grids. Streets had been given American names. Contact points with the enemy were color-coded. I followed Smith and Byrne to "Violet," an intersection where Alpha would link up with Bravo, and where the commercial part of southern Fallujah edged into the residential part. Here Bravo intended to go "firm" for a while—to dig in and establish yet another forward headquarters.

We were now about a hundred yards from the point of contact with the enemy. Two Marine M1A1 Abrams tanks stood fifty feet away. We all crouched against a wall as bullets whizzed by. But as the Marines consolidated the position,

the whistles turned to cracks, so we stood up and relaxed a bit. One Marine took a leak. Through binoculars could be seen men armed with RPG launchers and wearing black pajamas, surrounded by women and children, taunting us. Only the snipers tried to get shots off at them.

Byrne's Humvee pulled up, with Corporal Magdalin at the wheel. Byrne and Smith began conferring with the FOB over the battalion tac. Smith wanted to move the two tanks southward to draw enemy fire away from Bravo, allowing his men to further advance. But he did not have direct command over the tank unit, so the request had to "go up through staff" before the tanks right next to him could move. Eventually they did. Even here, in the midst of the battlefield, there was an issue with cumbersome management.

Moreover, Bravo and the other infantry companies were dangerously scattered throughout the southern half of the city—so much so that the enemy could easily infiltrate a large warren of streets to the rear, between Bravo's newly advanced position and the FOB about a mile to the southeast. The company commanders would deal with this problem by standing up nonstop nighttime satellite patrols, despite the sleep deprivation afflicting many Marines.

Another Marine battalion, the 3rd of the 4th, would arrive in a few days from western Iraq to assist 1/5 and 2/1. But that redeployment might conceivably make the Marines vulnerable in another part of their area of responsibility. A hundred and thirty thousand U.S. soldiers in Iraq were simply not enough to deal with a small fraction of that number of insurgents. It wasn't only because insurgencies, pace C. E. Callwell, arise from the soil itself, and thus have whole categories of advantages that a military force from the outside, alien to the culture, lacks. It was also because—as the large number of American troops near the Baghdad airport attested—the U.S. defense establishment was still organized for World War II and the Korean War, with too many chiefs at enormous rear bases, and too few Indians at the edges. In the weeks ahead the Marines at Fallujah would attempt to avoid large-scale bloodshed by seeking Iraqi surrogates to patrol the city. Such an expedient may provide a hint as to how the U.S. military will deal with Iraq as a whole.

I last saw Captain Jason Smith in the middle of a street in Fallujah that was popping with small-arms fire; his expression was hardy and purposeful. T. E. Lawrence called doubt "our modern crown of thorns"; Smith betrayed none. He was enunciating orders through the ICOM, and conferring through the battalion tac: "Blackhawk, Apache, Crazy Horse ..." His rawboned visage might have been the subject of an oil portrait by Frederic Remington, of a nineteenth-century cavalry officer fighting the Plains Indians, or of an officer of the old Confederacy that still inhabited the soul of the U.S. military, invigorating its fighting spirit. His expression, his whole demeanor, was that of an earlier, less complicated age. ▀

ENEMY AMERICANS

Jose Padilla and Yaser Esam Hamdi are American citizens. The Bush Administration has claimed the right to imprison them indefinitely without charge or trial, on the grounds that they are "enemy combatants" in the war on terror. Does a new kind of war require new kinds of laws?

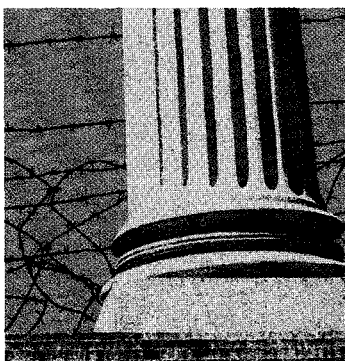
BY BENJAMIN WITTES

Illustrations by Marc Yankus

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June 10, 2002, the day John Ashcroft announced the arrest of Jose Padilla, marked a low point in Ashcroft's career as Attorney General. The FBI had nabbed Padilla, a.k.a. Abdullah al-Muhajir, a full month earlier, at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, and Ashcroft happened to be in Moscow when the government decided to disclose the arrest. Unwilling to leave the announcement to anyone else, he breathlessly took to the airwaves to declare that the Administration had "disrupted an unfolding terrorist plot to attack the United States by exploding a radioactive dirty bomb." "Let me be clear," Ashcroft said. "We know from multiple independent and corroborating sources that Abdullah al-Muhajir was closely associated with al-Qaeda, and that as an al-Qaeda operative he was involved in planning future terrorist attacks on innocent American civilians in the United States."

Ashcroft's peculiar exercise in self-promotion backfired badly. For one thing, it infuriated the White House. Not only did the Attorney General seem to take credit for the arrest, but he rather overstated its drama. Any dirty-bomb plot—if that's what Padilla was indeed involved in—was far from "unfolding"; it had barely been hatched, as other officials hastened to clarify. Padilla, an American and a former gang member who had committed murder as a juvenile and had become a Muslim in prison, had returned to the United States from Pakistan in order to scout out possible targets for al-Qaeda attacks, according to the government. Detonating a dirty bomb was one of the possibilities he had researched in Pakistan, where he had allegedly spent time over a few years meeting and training with al-Qaeda operatives. But as Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz explained at a later news conference, "There was not an actual plan." The FBI stopped Padilla "in the initial planning stages."



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Ashcroft's race to the microphone also helped attach his face to one of the most controversial security policies of the post-9/11 Bush Administration: its assertion that it may imprison indefinitely those it deems "enemy combatants" in the war on terror, even if they are American citizens. Ashcroft announced from Moscow not merely that the government had arrested Padilla but also that he and the Defense Department had "recommended that the President of

the United States, in his capacity as commander in chief, determine that [Padilla] is an enemy combatant who poses a serious and continuing threat to the American people and our national security." As a result, Ashcroft stated, Padilla had been "transferred from the custody of the Justice Department to the custody of the Defense Department"—where he has remained ever since without charge or trial, and for much of the time without access to his lawyer.

By the end of this June the Supreme Court will rule on Padilla's case and that of Yaser Esam Hamdi, the only other American citizen currently in Pentagon custody as an enemy combatant—and also, separately, on the jurisdiction of U.S. courts over the cases of noncitizen combatants held at Guantánamo Bay. In doing so the justices will effectively make new law, defining to a great extent the scope of presidential powers, individual liberties, and judicial oversight in the war on terrorism. The justices will, in a very real sense, define whether the "war on terrorism" is a real war at all—that is, a conflict that triggers the full array of presidential powers, including the power to detain enemies—or simply a rhetorical device, like the war on drugs and the war on cancer. At oral

arguments on April 28 the justices probed both sides with tough questions, expressing concerns about detention with so little oversight, about infringing on presidential war powers, and—in Padilla's case—about whether the Supreme Court

has jurisdiction to decide the matter at all. The Court did not clearly tip its hand as to how it will rule.

If the “enemy combatant” cases of Padilla and Hamdi present a clash between liberty and security, each side champions one while giving short shrift to the other. The military wants to treat terrorism cases under the laws of war—indeed, under a particularly convenient reading of those laws from the Administration’s point of view. Civil libertarians and defense lawyers insist on using the more rights-friendly criminal-justice system. In other words, although common rhetoric holds that the war on terrorism is a “different kind of war,” neither side entirely accepts the implications of that observation. At the heart of the civil-libertarian position lies a partial denial that the current war is, legally speaking, real—or real enough to substantially broaden presidential powers. Meanwhile, the Pentagon balks at the suggestion that the war is different enough to require any heightened judicial review, legal accountability on the part of the executive, or procedural protections for those captured in “combat.”

Between these extremes a few voices of moderation have struggled to be heard. Behind the scenes in Washington one of those voices belongs to the civil libertarians’ *bête noire*, John Ashcroft. This is surprising, given Ashcroft’s Moscow stunt—which, after all, played perfectly to his existing image.

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As one former senior Justice Department official ruefully summarized it, Ashcroft has come to represent the “hardened, religiously inspired zealot who is looking to take away everyone’s civil liberties.” He supervised the roundup of aliens after September 11 and zealously guarded the secrecy concerning their detention. He championed the Patriot Act. He promulgated regulations allowing the government to monitor lawyers’ conversations with imprisoned clients suspected of active terrorist ties. The Attorney General’s proud declaration—and the Justice Department’s subsequent energetic defense—of the President’s authority to hold an American citizen like Padilla in military custody seemed like just more of the same.

But in the debate over Padilla and Hamdi the Attorney General has proved a relative softy. In fact, holding American citizens as enemy combatants was less the Justice Department’s preference than the Pentagon’s, though one would not know this from the public posture of either agency. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld scarcely mentions Padilla or Hamdi, leaving questions about the Administration’s policy to Justice Department lawyers. Those lawyers are obliged to defend any government policy for which they can advance a

reasonable argument. As the months of detention turned into years, however, close observers of the enemy-combatant cases began to see hints of a fissure between the Pentagon and the Justice Department. Ashcroft’s aides grew increasingly frustrated as their boss took heat for the policy, and word began to leak out that the Attorney General and his staff were pushing to temper key aspects of it. Recent press reports have even disclosed that the deputy solicitor general, Paul Clement—the government’s chief counsel on the cases, who has publicly argued the hard line before numerous courts—was internally urging a more moderate stance.

On the record, even former department officials are circumspect about this difference of opinion. Viet Dinh, who served as assistant attorney general for legal policy, coyly describes “a systemic and healthy tension between the Justice Department and other departments engaged in the war on terrorism—including the Department of Defense.” He insists that although the Justice Department has a voice, “at the end of the day the decision” on enemy combatants “is made by the client agency and approved by the President.” Speaking on condition of anonymity, sources are more explicit. The rumors of a rift within the Administration are “absolutely true,” a former senior Justice Department official told me recently. “There are a lot

of people who can’t wait for the background documents to come out. History will view John Ashcroft very differently than his contemporary critics do.” Ashcroft’s position, this source emphasized, is not one that civil-liberties groups would find congenial, but neither is it

the hard-line stance that Justice Department lawyers have taken in court. In particular, Ashcroft did not believe that Padilla and Hamdi should be denied meaningful access to counsel. The Justice lawyers “took that position because they’re good team players and they know who the client is,” the former official said. “But this is an incredibly difficult argument to make, and Ashcroft and [Solicitor General] Ted Olson and Clement are personally deeply uncomfortable with it.”

When the military first shipped Hamdi to the United States, in April of 2002, his case seemed more a curiosity than a flash point in the legal war between the Bush Administration and its civil-libertarian critics. Two months earlier the Justice Department had indicted John Walker Lindh, the famed “American Taliban” from Marin County, California, on conspiracy and gun charges. Next to the case of the suburban teenager who trekked halfway around the world to take up arms for Islamic fundamentalism, Hamdi held little fascination. His American birth and consequent citizenship were an accident of fate: his

Saudi Arabian father happened to be working in Louisiana in 1980, when Hamdi was born. Rather than an American rebelling against his upbringing, Hamdi appeared to be simply another Middle Eastern youth who found the Taliban an attractive cause.

Why the military took Hamdi from the Guantánamo Bay naval base in Cuba (where he had been held with other Taliban and al-Qaeda detainees following his capture by the Northern Alliance) to its brig at Norfolk, Virginia, and later to a brig in South Carolina, remains somewhat murky. The goal does not seem to have been to prosecute Hamdi under criminal law, as Lindh was prosecuted (though the Justice Department did consider it). Instead, the transfer was motivated in part by practical concerns—one of which, according to a former Justice Department official who was involved in the decision, was whether having Hamdi at Guantánamo would “subject the whole base to judicial review” if he challenged his detention in court. But the “primary motivation,” this official says, was the very idea the government now rejects in court: that citizens are somehow different from other combatants, and consequently that “enemy combatants who are citizens are just going to be treated differently and brought back” to U.S. territory.

Representing Hamdi is Frank Dunham, the federal public defender in Alexandria, Virginia. The federal courthouse in Dunham’s district has become a kind of front line in the legal war on terror—a function of its proximity to Washington and its prosecution-friendly environment: Virginia is within the jurisdiction of the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, perhaps the country’s most conservative appellate court. Dunham has seen more than his share of combat duty: in addition to representing Hamdi, he defends the accused 9/11 conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui. Before Hamdi showed up, it had looked briefly as if Dunham might be assigned to Lindh’s case as well, and it was his brief involvement with Lindh’s defense that triggered his concern for Hamdi.

Dunham assumed that Hamdi would be indicted and prosecuted, just as Lindh had been. He told me, “The whole case against Lindh was based on statements that he made after he had been captured. And so I was anxious to ... get in there and advise [Hamdi], who I was sure had probably already made statements, not to make any more.” But Hamdi’s not talking was the last thing the Administra-

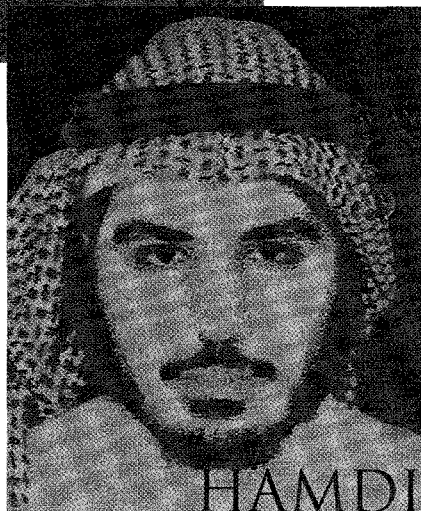
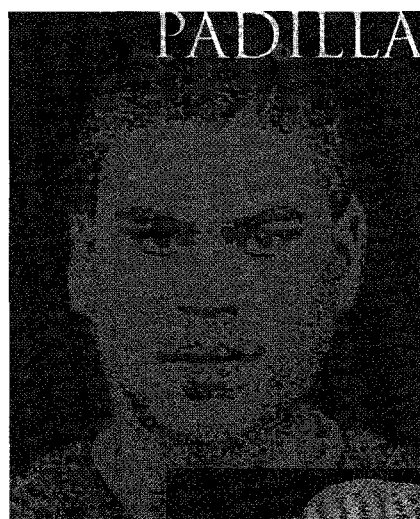
tion wanted. Officials have often emphasized that their purpose in detaining enemy combatants is not punishment; rather, it is to disable them as fighters and to interrogate them for intelligence purposes. So it’s not altogether surprising that when, in mid-April of 2002, Dunham wrote a letter asking to see his putative client, the government did not leap to accede. In fact, Dunham received no response beyond a cursory acknowledgment that his request had been “forwarded to appropriate officials.” After three weeks of waiting he went to court to challenge the detention—still assuming, he says, that an indictment was on the way.

It wasn’t—but the Pentagon was in no rush to make this clear. Initially the government stalled even on stating a legal basis for its detention of an American citizen without either charge or access to a lawyer. At a hearing before a magistrate on May 20, 2002, while arguing for more time to respond to Dunham’s challenge and against Dunham’s gaining access to Hamdi in the meantime, a government lawyer stated formally, “It’s the position of the [government] that Mr. Hamdi is an unlawful enemy combatant, and ... that’s why he’s being held under these circumstances.” But the Administra-

tion did not make its full position clear until June of 2002, after the case had made the first of its three trips to the Fourth Circuit. At that point the Pentagon claimed not only that it could lock Hamdi up as an enemy combatant with “no right of access to counsel to challenge [his] detention,” but also that the courts had no authority to examine the designation. “The court may not second-guess the military’s enemy combatant determination,” the brief contended. “[Its]

inquiry should come to an end once the military has shown ... that it has determined that the detainee is an enemy combatant.” Enemy combatants may be held “at least for the duration of a conflict”; allowing lawyers into the picture “is likely to interfere with if not irreparably harm the military’s ongoing efforts to gather intelligence that may protect American interests and lives in the war effort and help protect the home front from further attacks.”

The Office of the Solicitor General filed this brief only days after Ashcroft announced Padilla’s arrest; suddenly the detention of Americans as enemy combatants appeared much more threatening to civil liberties. Unlike Hamdi, Padilla had not been captured on a distant battlefield. Civilian law enforcement had detained him domestically as a material witness



in the 9/11 investigation. Placed in the civilian justice system, he had been assigned a lawyer, Donna Newman, and permitted to meet with her over the course of a month. By June, when the Pentagon shipped Padilla to a brig in South Carolina, any conceivable threat from him had long since been neutralized. Yet a stroke of President Bush's pen declared him "a continuing present and grave danger to the national security of the United States," and stripped him of all the protections of the civilian system. Depriving him of those rights made it easier to interrogate him for intelligence purposes, and relieved the government of a vexing problem: how to try a man against whom the evidence came from detainees abroad, who could not easily be produced in federal court. But it also raised disturbing questions. If a court could not look behind the government's allegations against Padilla or Hamdi, what would prevent the Administration from arbitrarily detaining political foes, domestic critics, or nonviolent Muslim radicals? For

If a court cannot look behind the government's allegations, what prevents the Administration from arbitrarily detaining political foes, domestic critics, or nonviolent Muslim radicals?

that matter, what would protect citizens against simple error?

The Administration has since moderated its position somewhat. Early on, in response to a preliminary Fourth Circuit ruling on Hamdi's case, the government dropped its claim that the courts had no power to hear the evidence behind an enemy-combatant designation. Instead it filed a pair of declarations, one for each case, by a Defense Department official named Michael Mobbs. Mobbs, who claimed no firsthand knowledge of any of the facts, alleged that around July or August of 2001 Hamdi had gone to Afghanistan, where he "affiliated with a Taliban military unit and received weapons training." Hamdi carried a gun and stayed with that unit after 9/11, Mobbs said, until it surrendered to America's local allies, in "late 2001." Mobbs did not claim that Hamdi had ever fired a shot. In a somewhat longer declaration Mobbs alleged that Padilla had "been closely associated with known members and leaders of the Al Qaeda terrorist network" while abroad, and that he and an accomplice had approached the senior al-Qaeda figure Abu Zubaydah "with their proposal to conduct terrorist operations within the United States." Mobbs reported that Padilla received explosives training in Pakistan from al-Qaeda, researched the construction of a dirty bomb, and discussed detonating such a device "within the United States, possibly in Washington, D.C." Although he noted that one source doubted whether Padilla was a "member" of al-Qaeda, Mobbs nevertheless concluded that Padilla had been sent to Chicago to "conduct reconnaissance and/or other attacks on their behalf."

With the Supreme Court eyeing Hamdi's case late last

year, the government relaxed its policy still further, finally allowing both men to meet with their lawyers at the South Carolina brig. Their intelligence value had been exhausted, the Pentagon said, and the Administration declared that it had a policy of permitting access to counsel as soon as military and intelligence interests were satisfied—though it had not formally stated this position until the threat of Supreme Court review loomed.

The Pentagon, however, has not wavered from its core position: the President has the authority to designate enemy combatants, and the courts have no authority to gather evidence beyond what the government submits. Consequently, enemy combatants, even if they are American citizens, have no right to challenge the evidence against them or to consult with lawyers. Any access to counsel the government provides is merely an act of grace. And, at least for alleged al-Qaeda operatives, this state of affairs can persist until

the war on terrorism is over—a time officials have repeatedly said may never come. In other words, the government is asserting an essentially unreviewable power to detain forever those the President claims are terrorists.

Much as this argument may shock the rights-oriented consciousness of the American public, the government's position has a long and distinguished history. In fact, many aspects of the argument are disturbingly difficult to dispute. There is something deeply incongruous, for example, about judges' reviewing battlefield decisions like the one that put Hamdi in military custody, or defense lawyers' cross-examining military officers about a detainee's capture. The adversarial judicial process was not designed for overseeing the conduct of wars; the Constitution gives this responsibility to the executive branch.

Moreover, Americans have served in foreign armies in the past, and the Supreme Court has never suggested that their nationality entitles them to be treated differently from other combatants if they are detained. The Court considered this issue in the now famous 1942 case of a group of Nazi saboteurs sent to U.S. shores to disrupt war industries. Like Padilla, the saboteurs were caught by civilian law enforcement, not by soldiers on a battlefield. And two of them, like Padilla and Hamdi, claimed American citizenship. Yet this moved the Court not at all: "Citizenship in the United States of an enemy belligerent does not relieve him from the consequences of a belligerency which is unlawful because in violation of the law of war. Citizens who associate themselves with the military arm of the enemy government, and with its aid, guidance and direction enter this country bent on hostile acts, are enemy belligerents." Courts have never given enemy combatants lawyers to challenge their detention. How different, really, is an al-Qaeda operative bent on detonating a



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EXPERIENCE POLITICS

dirty bomb from a German saboteur during World War II?

At one level the two are hardly different, yet the analogy ultimately breaks down. To begin with, al-Qaeda is not a traditional uniformed military force—in fact, it's not a geographically distinct military force at all. Rather, it is composed of cells, scattered worldwide, whose members seek to blend into the societies they wish to destroy. The organization's very nature makes distinguishing between combatants and noncombatants extremely difficult. When captured, al-Qaeda operatives often deny their affiliation; Padilla's lawyer, for example, does not concede any of the government's allegations against her client. In traditional conflicts, identifying enemy fighters is simpler. The Nazi saboteurs never disputed their belligerency; they only questioned whether the military tribunal that tried them was a lawful one.

But if fighting wars is a matter for the executive branch, resolving factual disputes with dire legal implications for an accused person's liberty is a matter for the judiciary. In a speech earlier this year Alberto Gonzales, the White House counsel, argued against strenuous judicial review of the Administration's process for designating enemy combatants. That process, he said, is rigorous and multi-layered enough for the public to have confidence that "the President's Commander-in-Chief authority is exercised in a reasoned and deliberate manner." This is an argument only an executive-branch official could love. A world of sleeper cells against which the tools of domestic law enforcement are routinely deployed argues strongly for a judiciary that plays some role in preventing executive error.

More fundamentally, the idea of holding detainees until the end of hostilities makes no sense in a war for which we have no clear definition of victory. That idea assumes that wars take place between states or other political bodies that will eventually negotiate peace. An army fights not with any individual combatant, the theory goes, but with the entire opposing force. Under international law, captured enemy fighters who obey the laws of war—commonly known as prisoners of war—are therefore granted an honorable status, protected against most prosecution, and ensured generous treatment and a promise of repatriation when hostilities end. But in this case nobody can foresee the day when hostilities will end. Not only that, but America is very much at war with al-Qaeda members—individually as well as collectively. If we were ever to defeat the organization completely, repatriating prisoners would most likely cause hostilities to begin anew.

The Pentagon is denying Hamdi and Padilla not only the due process of the civilian criminal-justice system but also the process promised by military regulations and the laws of war. It treats them (and all the other captives) not as prisoners of war but as "unlawful combatants"—fighters who do not themselves observe the laws of war. This is not an unreasonable judgment, since neither the Taliban nor al-Qaeda operates as a regular fighting force. But the Geneva Convention requires individualized hearings before a "competent

tribunal" to determine POW status, and the Administration has bullheadedly refused to provide any of the war-on-terrorism detainees with such a hearing. Hamdi and Padilla have been locked up under conditions that presuppose the illegality of their behavior, with no forum in which to argue either that they were not combatants or that they are entitled to be treated as POWs.

The absence of due process has bothered Ashcroft and other Justice Department officials. According to a former senior official, Ashcroft agreed with the Pentagon that the President has the authority to designate an enemy combatant, and that such a person does not have the same right to counsel as a criminal defendant. But according to this source, Ashcroft felt that an American citizen *does* have the right to challenge his detention. And since access to a lawyer is necessary to exercise that right, he was uncomfortable with permanently impeding a citizen's access to a lawyer.

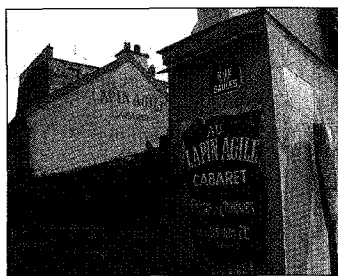
Various proposals that sought to protect the Pentagon's needs while allowing Padilla and Hamdi meaningful access to counsel floated around the department. The Administration considered delayed access—the route it ultimately took. It considered appointing military lawyers or appointing outside counsel who had been cleared to see classified information, and letting them see the fruits of interrogations. Those lawyers could argue before the courts that the interrogations were no longer delivering valuable intelligence, and thus that full access to their clients would do no harm. The Supreme Court's decision to examine the matter greatly strengthened the Justice Department's hand, because the Pentagon then became concerned about an adverse ruling. In fact, the Administration's ultimate decision to let citizen enemy combatants consult lawyers when possible reflects in part a desire to make its case as attractive as possible for the Court. Gonzales has acknowledged as well that the Administration would have designated more American citizens as enemy combatants if the Justice Department had not been serving as a brake on the Administration.

Frank Dunham says he has recently noticed a marked change in the behavior of Justice Department lawyers toward him (from "cold" and "impersonal" to collegial), leading him to wonder whether they might earlier have felt constrained by the Pentagon's concerns. Donna Newman also thinks the Justice Department's lawyers have been caught between their legal instincts and the demands of the military. On the surface the Administration seems united, she says, but "there's an undercurrent there of non-agreement, and it certainly cuts against the Justice Department's historical position."

Of course, civil libertarians generally deny outright that an American citizen can lawfully be held as an enemy combatant. Dunham says the government's only choice with respect to Hamdi is to "charge him with a crime or let him go." Newman says the same about Padilla.

Learning Language on the Move

PARIS — At the turn of the twentieth century, few locations in Europe attracted the throng of aspiring artists and musicians who gravitated to Montmartre, that hill overlooking all of Paris, and gathered at Lapin Agile, café rendezvous for creative spirits from Berlioz to Picasso. Today, you can join the songs, humor and poetry at Lapin Agile until 2 in the morning. But there's a problem. You're speechless. Not that you're awed by the spectacle.



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Be Picasso.

So back to Lapin Agile. We don't know what Picasso said at the café (with apologies to Steve Martin), where he sat or what he may have sketched on the walls. Some say he painted *Les Femmes d'Alger* in Montmartre. Undoubtedly he spoke French and participated lustily in the songs and humor till daylight.

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This argument effectively rejects the premise that the war on terrorism is a literal war—at least one that should grant the President the powers that wars have traditionally given the executive branch. Few would claim, after all, that an American citizen who had been caught fighting with an Iraqi army unit would be entitled to be freed if he could not be charged. How are Hamdi and Padilla different from such a citizen? Critical to their cases is a federal law stating that Americans cannot be held without charge absent an act of Congress. Although President Bush did get congressional authorization to use “all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001,” Dunham and Newman argue that this resolution did not specifically authorize detention of American citizens without charge. But under this logic the government could not detain Hamdi or Padilla as an enemy combatant even if he announced in open court (as Zacarias Moussaoui did) that he was an al-Qaeda operative. It’s a little hard to see why “all necessary force,” which clearly includes the power to kill, does not also include the lesser power to detain.

More generally, the defense argument rests on the myth that in America the government cannot detain people without charge. In fact people are locked up without criminal charges all the time—even in peacetime. Witnesses in criminal cases can be detained as material witnesses for “a reasonable period of time” if the court believes they might flee. The government takes aliens facing deportation into custody without accusing them of criminal wrongdoing. The state can hold mentally ill people indefinitely if they present a danger to themselves or others. If a schizophrenic, whose condition is not his fault, can be locked up without criminal charge, why must an al-Qaeda operative, who may be far more dangerous (and for reasons that *are* his fault), be indicted or released? The difficult question is not whether noncriminal detentions can be lawful but, rather, how the courts should scrutinize them and whether that scrutiny sufficiently protects a detainee from arbitrary or malicious government abuse.

Hamdi’s and Padilla’s cases have progressed differently. The former’s bounced up and down the appellate ladder as the Fourth Circuit tried to rein in an aggressive district judge, Robert G. Doumar, who sought to examine in detail the intelligence reports that formed the basis of the Defense Department’s claims against Hamdi. The court’s ruling, handed down by a three-judge panel in January of 2003, bought the Administration’s argument almost completely. The court noted that Hamdi’s pleadings, which Dunham had filed at the request of his client’s father and without consulting the inaccessible Hamdi, appeared to concede that he had been caught in Afghanistan. Seeking to rule narrowly and restrict itself to battlefield detentions, the court unanimously declared that “[where] it is undis-

puted that [the detainee] was captured in a zone of active combat operations abroad, further judicial inquiry is unwarranted when the government has responded to the petition by setting forth factual assertions which would establish a legally valid basis for the petitioner’s detention.” Of course, nobody knew what facts Hamdi might dispute if given the chance. So Dunham appealed—first to the full Fourth Circuit and then to the Supreme Court.

Padilla’s case, meanwhile, remained in the hands of Chief Judge Michael Mukasey, in federal court in New York. In December of 2002 Mukasey issued what remains the most thorough and intellectually compelling opinion yet written on the subject of enemy combatants. Yes, he wrote, the President does have the authority to detain enemy fighters without necessarily bringing criminal charges against them, even if those fighters happen to be citizens. Congress has authorized war, and “the authority conferred by the Joint Resolution [authorizing force] itself is broad,” he wrote. “[It] authorizes action against not only those connected to the subject organizations who are directly responsible for the September 11 attacks, but also against those who would engage in ‘future acts of international terrorism’ as part of ‘such . . . organizations.’” Clearly, if the government’s allegations proved true, Padilla fit this category. Moreover, Mukasey adopted a highly deferential standard of review: if “some evidence” supported the military’s position, he would okay the detention. But unlike the Fourth Circuit, Mukasey did not accept that Michael Mobbs’s declaration of allegations against Padilla was all he needed to see. He wanted to hear from Padilla himself before consigning him to his fate. “The government has not disputed Padilla’s right to challenge his detention by means of a habeas corpus petition,” Mukasey wrote, and “Padilla’s right to present facts is rooted firmly in the statutes that provide the basis for his petition.” Consequently, “[his] need to consult with a lawyer to help him do what the statute permits him to do is obvious.” Mukasey noted the government’s warnings that giving Donna Newman access to Padilla would interfere with Padilla’s interrogation or allow him to pass messages through her to al-Qaeda confederates, but he was not deterred by them.

Mukasey’s Solomonic effort ultimately satisfied neither side; each appealed the aspects of the ruling unfavorable to it. Newman initially described the opinion as “significant for Mr. Padilla, and . . . significant for all citizens,” and pushed unsuccessfully to have its access-to-counsel portion swiftly implemented. Yet she later asked an appeals court to reverse Mukasey’s opinion that the President had the power to hold her client at all. The American Civil Liberties Union—which had been quick to brand the ruling “a crucial rejection of the Bush administration’s claim of almost unbridled power to unilaterally detain an American citizen and hold him indefinitely and incommunicado”—supported her appeal.

Justice Department officials have privately expressed agreement with Mukasey’s ruling. Viet Dinh, the former legal-policy chief, says his personal views are “identical” to Judge

Mukasey's. Yet at the Pentagon's behest the Justice Department has done everything in its power to get the opinion reversed. First, Justice Department lawyers asked Mukasey to reconsider, asserting that the department's prior briefing "failed sufficiently to focus on the grave damage to national security interests that would result from interference with the interrogation of Padilla." And the department submitted an affidavit from Vice Admiral Lowell E. Jacoby, the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, warning that "anything that threatens the perceived dependency and trust between the subject and interrogator directly threatens the value of interrogation as an intelligence-gathering tool." In other words, any hope Padilla harbors that the legal system will save him reduces the chances that he'll deliver valuable intelligence.

When Mukasey refused to yield, the Justice Department went over his head. This proved, at least in the short term, a disaster for the Administration.

The Second Circuit Court of Appeals, which has jurisdiction over New York and is one of the country's more liberal appellate tribunals, ruled that the military had no authority to hold Padilla without "specific congressional authorization." The two-to-one

majority wrote that the President lacks any inherent power to detain an enemy combatant outside a battlefield, and that the congressional authorization of force did not confer "clear" and "unmistakable" permission to detain citizens: "While it may be possible to infer a power of detention from the Joint Resolution in the battlefield context where detentions are necessary to carry out the war, there is no reason to suspect from the language of the Joint Resolution that Congress believed it would be authorizing the detention of an American citizen already held in a federal correctional institution."

In both enemy-combatant cases the dissenting judges demonstrated far more sophistication than those who wrote the majority opinions. When the full Fourth Circuit declined to reconsider the three-judge panel's opinion in the Hamdi case, Judge Diana Gribbon Motz conceded, "Precedent dictates that we must tolerate some abrogation of constitutional rights if Hamdi is, in fact, an enemy combatant." But she insisted that there must be some mechanism for confirming the executive's determination of Hamdi's status: either some judicial examination of the intelligence underlying Mobbs's declaration or some ability on Hamdi's part "to proffer affirmative evidence of his 'non-combatant' status" if he disputed the government's allegations. When the Second Circuit ruled, Judge Richard Wesley pointed out that by denying the Pentagon's right to hold Padilla at all, his court had failed to address "the real weakness of the government's appeal"—the more specific contention that "Mr. Padilla can be held incommunicado for 18 months with no serious opportunity to put the government to its proof by an appropriate standard."

Will the Supreme Court rule more constructively than the two lower courts did? Only if it acknowledges that neither the laws of war nor America's criminal-justice rules provide a complete model for the war on terrorism—and that the two systems will have to be blended. Ideally, the blending process would take place not in the courts but in Congress, which is supposed to be responsible for writing laws. But not many legislators seem willing or able to take on the tough task of synthesizing the insights of the rules of war and the criminal-justice system. Adam Schiff, a Democratic congressman from California, has introduced a bill that would authorize the detention of U.S. citizens as enemy combatants but would require the Pentagon to set standards that "guarantee timely access to judicial review to challenge the basis for a detention, and permit the detainee access to counsel." The bill has no Senate counter-

The idea of holding detainees until the end of hostilities makes no sense in a war for which we have no clear definition of victory. The government is asserting an essentially unreviewable power to detain forever those the President claims are terrorists.

part, however, and Schiff has been unable even to get it a hearing. So the Supreme Court will take the first crack at crafting a reasonable process under which enemy-combatant cases may proceed. The justices could do a lot worse—and they could not do much better—than to make national law out of Mukasey's opinion.

How would Hamdi and Padilla fare under the process outlined by Mukasey? My guess is badly. Padilla is most likely an evil guy; Hamdi, though far less menacing, was found in Afghanistan. His father has said he was doing relief work, but that would be a tough case to make. It seems highly likely that the government would prevail in both instances.

But who knows? In March I had lunch with Frank Dunham, shortly after he had finally been granted an unmonitored meeting with his client. Everything Hamdi had said was classified, so he couldn't tell me anything about the substance of their conversation. He did, however, tell me what had triggered the visit. In an earlier session he had given Hamdi a copy of Mobbs's declaration of government allegations against him, and Hamdi had responded with a letter saying, in Dunham's paraphrase, "I have very important information that you need to know before you go before the Supreme Court." In light of Hamdi's response, I asked, was Dunham confident that he had an issue to litigate if the Supreme Court gave him a chance?

"I like my hand better than theirs—a lot better," he said without hesitation. "And I would love—dearly love—to get Michael Mobbs up on that witness stand and have at him over that statement he wrote." ▀

AWEIGH

*A master and commander decides, after a lifetime on the water,
that he will no longer go down to the sea*

BY WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

.....

Consequential decisions can be triggered by inconsequential causes. *She leaned over, picked up the phone—and I knew then that I'd be filing for divorce.* But later, introspective curiosity sets in. And the search for self-justification. So we poke around dormant gray matter trying to bring out a plausible teleological narrative. All this has been happening to me since I decided to sell my boat.

Selling a boat one has spent happy decades on is, in a way, a fateful decision. It can be likened to a decision to stop skiing or playing the piano, if one has skied a lot or played the piano a lot. The sequence here is critical to the effort to explain a self-inflicted privation.

What brought it on? It wasn't that I decided to do away with my boat after narrowly surviving the storm I took it through. I wasn't making a gesture of despair and remorse after losing a companion overboard.

Dramatic forerunners engender sequels that are self-explanatory, most of the time. There was none such here to account for my decision. If there had been a catalytic event, you would be looking for something quite simple, on the order of resolving to file for divorce after finding your wife in bed with another man—a banality. It was the *inconsequential* factor that I searched for.

What did happen is that Michael, a first mate I had retained—as I regularly did—to crew for me one day every summer week and ten days in August, had had to pull away. A mortal cancer had seized his mother, quickly killing her. Of course he would leave me for a period, to be back in Canada with his father; I expected his return after two or three weeks, but then he reported that he had contracted an episodic malady of sorts that would keep him away for the balance of the sailing season. He would be returning directly to Yale to get on with his graduate work in molecular biology. My summer schedule was put awry.

A few weeks later, my plans reconstituted, I was sailing on *Patito* with three very old friends off Cape Cod. I blurted it out to them at dinner, on the fourth night, that I had decided to sell my boat—on which, as on its predecessors, they had all sailed with me over many years, and to distant places. Their stupefaction was gratifying, in that it

confirmed the felt gravity of my decision. I had acted on impulse—but not, I tried to explain to them, impulsively.

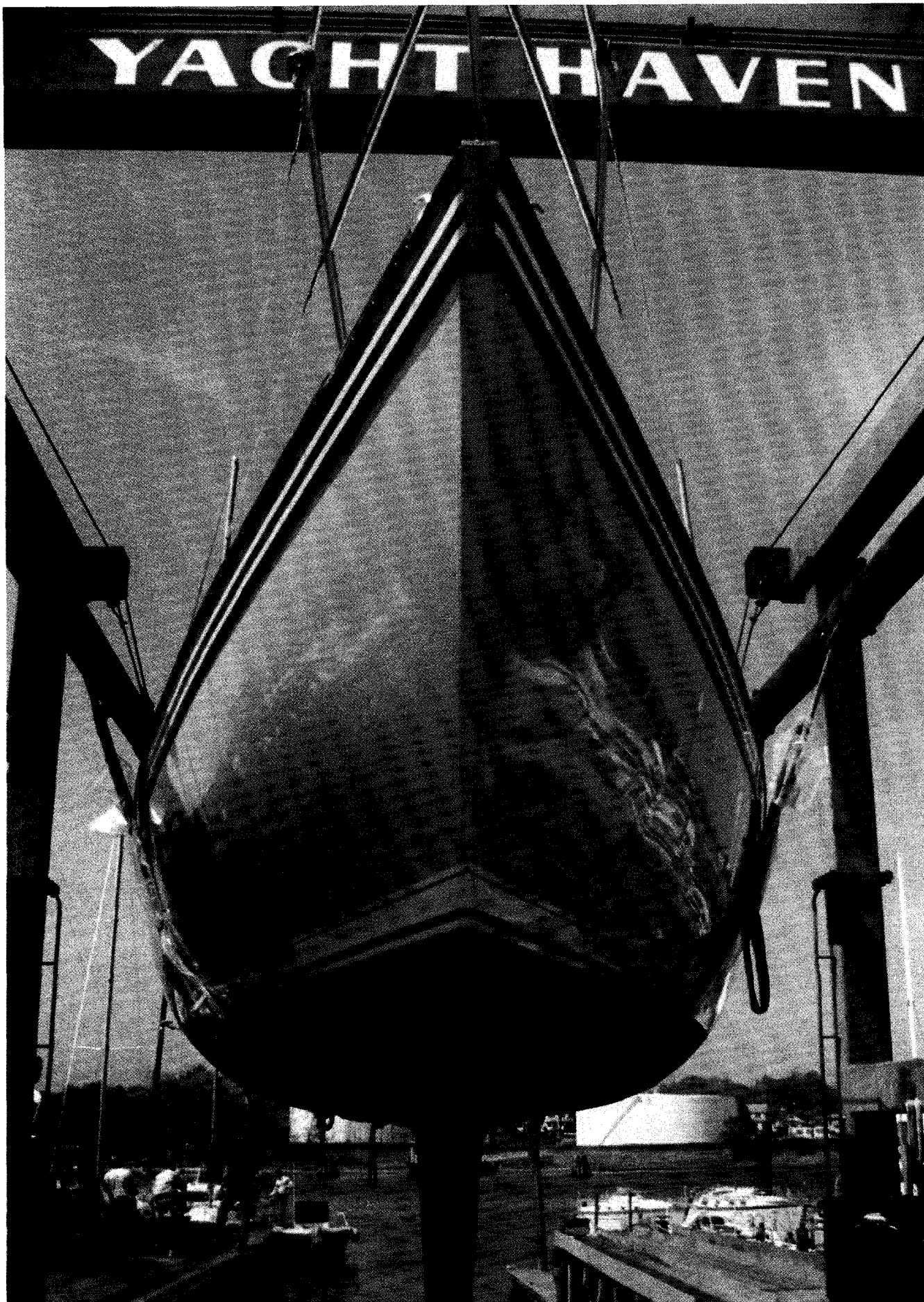
In September of 1938 two of my sisters and I received distressing news, relayed to us by our governess. It was that two weeks hence we were to embark for England, where for one academic year we would attend English boarding schools. This disruption of happy lives, home-schooled in northwestern Connecticut, we found unbearable. My father, who had thus struck us down, was at the time visiting Europe with my mother and other siblings. He had given no reason for this arbitrary move, beyond saying that the experience of foreign schooling would be educational for us; never mind that we had all already been to British schools five years earlier, when we were living in Europe. Age twelve, I wrote to him resignedly (there was no alternative to complying with my father's decisions) about the impending extraterritorialization, and took sly and arrant advantage of his predictable defensiveness—he owed us one, and he had a very tender heart. I told him with a letter that I pined to have a sailboat when we got back from the English ordeal.

And so, nine months later, in June of 1939, I beheld my own sailboat on the neighboring lake.

It was a torrid affair from the moment I sighted her. I thought it a filial gesture to name my boat *Sweet Isolation*, reflecting my father's political leanings in the pre-war years. My little (seventeen-foot) conventionally rigged Barracuda (sailing class extinct) took me around the triangular course on Lakeville Lake twice every Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday, mid-June to Labor Day. I contended in the no-handicap marathon against six other boats of different designs, all of them captained by aged men and women in their twenties and thirties. We all struggled hugely to acquire the trophy. You needed to win it three times before taking permanent ownership. An exact replica of it could be found at the local hardware store, on sale for \$21.

I would rise early on racing days to gauge the wind's preliminary dispositions,

William F. Buckley Jr. is the editor-at-large of National Review. His next book, Miles Gone By, is an autobiography.



and to contemplate a strategy for that afternoon. I would be driven the five miles to the lake, arriving an hour before race time so that I could practice my starts and coach my crew (usually one of my siblings). We had three summers of this before the Wononscopomuc Yacht Club races became a casualty of Pearl Harbor; they did not revive after the war. The spring-fed lake, one mile square, is still there, and from it, when the winds are still and the sun is low, you can discern the brick profile of the Hotchkiss School. On the opposite rise, in the low Berkshires, Wanda Landowska could view the lake from her house where, for RCA, she recorded her historic harpsichord renditions of *The Well-Tempered Clavichord*. On the afternoon of the recording session, after beginning to play, she stopped. She advised the state police, by telephone, that they must close the entire road east of the lake to traffic, so that she could have the total stillness she needed. No one had ever before made such a request; no one else ever will; but the police, dumbfounded by the high Teutonic voice of the lady whose face had graced *Time* magazine, complied.

There was no sailing for me during the war, but I was discharged from the Army in May of 1946 and had *Sweet Isolation* back in the water a week later. In July, I contrived a cradle on a four-wheel trolley. Attached to the station wagon, it took my boat to Edgartown. We sailed, my sisters and the childhood friend I'd be sharing a room with at Yale a month later, in those glamorous waters. One afternoon, off Chappaquiddick, the mast was disabled in a strong wind and my sister Tish was swept into Nantucket Sound. For harrowing minutes, as we struggled desperately to bring the boat about, we knew she was at risk of drowning. A Coast Guard vessel spotted her flailing arms and picked her up; then it fetched us and my crippled boat, and towed the bedraggled lot back to a marina.

That night, silent, we looked at the dinner menu at an inn overlooking the harbor. We were woozy from the afternoon's trauma, and unstimulated by alcohol (I wasn't yet twenty-one, and management would not serve me a beer). My eyes idled over to the cruising boats slipping into the harbor, their red and green running lights twinkling off the cozier water. There was shelter here from the heavy winds that continued to roil the sound outside. One vessel, especially imposing, was identified for our benefit by the waiter, a college student doing summer work and crewing in the afternoons on one of the racing boats. That boat going by—he pointed—was the *Manxman*, a surviving Class J boat, 136 feet long, created to compete for the America's Cup in the 1930s. I counted twelve or more crew members in the dimming light, fastening down sails, two or three of them, wearing yellow jackets and khaki shorts, crowded around the skipper. The sight of that long dark beauty, and of the sloops and yawls and cutters and schooners nestling in the harbor, many of them secured now on their moorings, paralyzed me with longing. A cruising sailboat! That was now the object of

my desire. For several years I read the yachting magazines as a window-shopper, praying that one day I would put my foot in the door, and sail into Edgartown Harbor as the captain of my own boat.

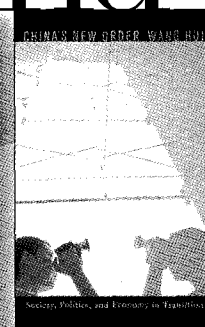
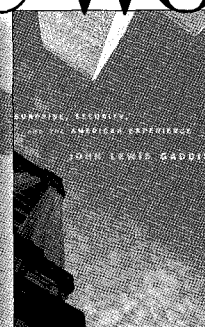
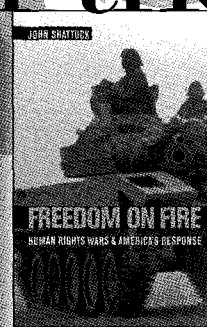
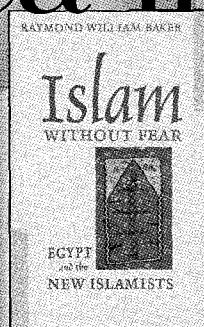
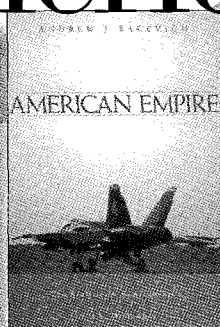
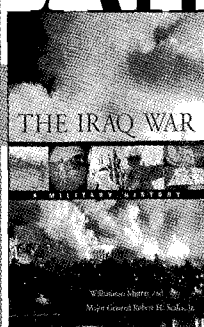
I did that in 1954, having conscripted my brother-in-law, who had never before sailed, into a joint purchase of *The Panic*, the name we gave to our Dutch-built forty-two-foot steel cutter. It was the most misbalanced sailing vessel ever created. In a hard wind, making way close-hauled, you needed the strength of both arms to hold the tiller to the desired angle.

But she was all ours, including the tiny captain's cabin, not much bigger than the berth it housed, and we gave it an enormous ice box in which, for long hauls, we could store as much as 250 pounds of ice. We laughed a lot on *The Panic*, cruising, on most summer weekends, my wife, Pat, presiding over a remarkable cuisine that evolved from three Sterno stoves that hung from individual fixtures. Multi-gimbaled, they were indifferent to any motion of the boat, fore and aft or side to side. One night in Maine, Pat's imaginative dinner was prolonged in preparation. I announced that in order to celebrate appropriately the wind, the sun, the stars, the moon, and the harbor in Maine (there is always reason to celebrate aboard a boat), I would pour myself a third drink, and I went to the bottle of pre-mixed margaritas she had brought on board. I wondered whether, having already drunk two, I would be courting tipsiness with a third, but I poured it anyway. I thought to ascertain the strength of the drink, and so tilted the kerosene lamp to read the fine print on the label. It described the ingredients and then gave directions: "Pour two ounces over ice. Then add tequila." I had been near tipsy from drinking lime juice—causing my crewmates and my wife to be tipsy with amusement.

Cruising in October to Bermuda, we had to make our way through the eastern end of a hurricane. After a very hard day's combat using only the storm jib and trysail, I finally hove to for a long night of furious wind. This capitulation at sea is achieved by adjusting the reduced sails to vie against one another in such fashion as to induce relative immobility.

The next day the crew, shaken after the struggle of the day before and the shriek of the wind against the shrouds during the sleepless night, was somnolent and detached. The dishes were unwashed. No one had moved to make breakfast. There was cloud cover, and we were too far from the island to take radio bearings on Bermuda's commercial radio station. I had to tell them that I simply didn't know where we were. Demoralization was setting in. I revived the crew by serving hardtack and port. The sweet alcoholic potion revived their spirits, and the chewy hardtack gave sustenance. The sun soon crept out, giving me a sight, and on we slogged in a 40-knot wind, eleven hours close-hauled on a starboard tack, ocean water taking up one third of the cubic space of the cock-

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pit, arriving finally in that tipsy boat at St. George's Harbor.

Earlier the same year we had raced *The Panic* with the Newport fleet to Bermuda. On arriving, I learned at a festive cocktail party the hairy tale of the metallurgist. He had raced in his brand-new thirty-eight-foot Swedish-built aluminum boat, on which, forty-eight hours out, was heard a thwack unrelated to the conventional creaks and groans of boats hard pressed under way. The thwack came again forty minutes later. The metallurgist took a professional interest in what was happening. He disclosed after the fourth thwack—they were coming at decreasing intervals—that when the interval was down to one minute, the vessel would have at most one remaining minute to stay afloat: an entire aluminum bulwark on the port side would at that point simply fall away. His boat arrived in Bermuda when the thwack-time interval was at four minutes. The owner sold the boat and never sailed again.

For all that his was a singular experience, his decision to get rid of the boat after undergoing it is hardly inexplicable (never mind that the Swedish builders flew in an engineer, and presumably a lawyer, to cope with the derelict). I would soon learn the psychological impact of a boat loss, not only on the owner but on others. *The Panic* was destroyed by a hurricane in 1961, in my back yard, so to speak. It was uprooted from its mooring at the Stamford Yacht Club and splayed across the stony breakwater at the harbor's entrance. The shock of its loss was felt by others who knew the boat. Hugh Kenner, the aseptic critic, let out a full-throated jeremiad. Here was the end of a boat that had "done much for her friends, in the summers before her side was stove in," he wrote to me.

She had taken them all around the Sound and along the New England coast, and even to Bermuda (thrice), and shown them Wood's Hole, and the Great Fish that eats taffrail logs, and the Kraken, and the strange men of Onset with their long faces, and perfect Edgartown; and lapped them at night gently to rest; and given them the wind and sun and made for them a place of adventure and refreshment and peace; and taught them this, that beyond illusion it is possible to be for hours and days on end perfectly and inexpressibly happy.

Boat owners tend to upgrade, and I now had the insurance money. I very quickly bought, sight unseen, a forty-foot Sparkman & Stephens yawl of illustrious design (Nevins 40) from its four owners in Miami. It was offered with a piquant story. The sailors had served together in the Army in Japan and, aged twenty to twenty-two, had dreamed of owning a sailboat and taking it around the world. They could put together only enough money to buy the bare boat and engine from the American boat company in Hong Kong. It was all teak—teakwood was cheap in that part of the world. They flew there joyfully upon their discharge, men with varied skills learned as civilians and in the Army. They sanded and painted the hull, mounted the

rigging, installed the plumbing and electrical systems, and finished the deck. Two months later the boat was ready, and they set out, westward, for Miami, arriving eighteen months later, flat broke and happy. They calculated that they had spent \$1.75 per person per day. That updates to about six dollars. I paid them \$30,000 for the *Suzy Wong*, and sailed her for sixteen years, some weekdays, most summer weekends, here and there cruising on blue water, running two races to Bermuda and one to Halifax, very contented until I found the *Cyrano*, a sixty-foot schooner with an eighteen-foot bowsprit—a big upgrade, though bought for the same \$30,000 I realized on selling the *Suzy*.

There was much to do to make that schooner habitable—indeed, to transform it into the dream boat that I sailed for ten years, and took across the Atlantic, Miami to Bermuda to the Azores to Gibraltar, with my son, my sister-in-law, sailing friends, a cook, a hand, and a mate. I built a dodger (this shields the deckhouse from the wind) and installed a circular sofa whose center could be raised and stripped of its cushions to form a circular table; with the center level on the springs, its cushions in place, four or even five flopped-out sailors could rest or read, and when it was lifted eight people could dine. Two long berths at either side of the navigation table proved handy, and now the rudder could be electronically controlled when the helmsman sought shelter. Protective canvas could be rolled down on all sides to seal in the entire area.

While standing in the navigation well, examining the almanac, the ship moving in a moderate following wind, I spotted the Pico light off Horta. Landfall after eleven days of sailing. I shouted back to my son, Christopher, at the wheel. His childhood friend Danny Merritt, who has sailed with me since he was a teenager, was sitting alongside on the taffrail. He stood up and peered excitedly in the direction I signaled. I wrote a book (*Airborne*) about that passage.

But the next year, sailing the *Cyrano* from Fort Lauderdale to Cozumel, again with my son and Danny, I reflected hard on the running costs, tucked into my briefcase by my bookkeeper. The figures spoke to me unanswerably: I had to sell the boat. There was only that single reason for doing so, but it was decisive. The *Cyrano* cost too much to maintain, my grand plan to subsidize it through chartering having failed after nine years of trying. If anybody (rich) is looking for a perfect boat, track it down, and live happily ever after.

It was then that I bought the *Patito*.

I left the purchase of the new boat in the hands of Christopher and Danny. It was they who thought to call it *Patito*, which is the Spanish diminutive for "duck," a term I use when addressing my wife, and she when talking to me. I knew that they would find the right boat, this time in fiberglass, to succeed the old wooden boat they had wearied of maintaining. I beheld the *Patito* for the very first time after giving a lecture at Trinity College and then driving

for almost two hours to Essex. I arrived at the dock in cold April weather at about eleven, and my new boat was there, lit up below with candlelight, a flicker or two of snow falling into the cockpit, the salon well warmed with a kerosene heater. Christo and Danny, in high spirits, had a bottle of wine open. The *Patito* is thirty-six feet, and the most intimate of my boats. I have written about it that it is perfect with four aboard, and that five are three too many. The *Patito* has been with me full time. I have been faithful to it except for three transoceanic sails on the *Sealestial*, a boat I skippered but did not own.

The *Sealestial* is a seventy-one-foot ketch. On transoceanic runs the rule was that I and my friends would do the sailing, and the (paid) crew would do the maintenance. It was a good arrangement, giving us, at work and at play, eating and sleeping, a privacy beyond even the gross privacy of living on a little boat in great oceans. On a 3,000-mile Pacific run, Hawaii to New Guinea, we did not once in thirty days see another ship at sea or a plane overhead. Such apparent alienation sharpened the miniaturization of it all. I calculated that from the starting point, in Hawaii, I could have directed the boat to land in Japan instead of New Guinea by altering the rudder a mere four degrees—one ninetieth of the orbit of possibilities. On that passage we had the run of experiences at sea, recounted in a book I wrote, *Racing Through Paradise*.

It was good that my sea books featured the same friends, given that one's memory of a boat incorporates the company aboard it. That essential factor of human pleasure—a small crew, mostly with repeat companions—struck me most vividly when, walking past the fleet that had just completed the Annapolis-Bermuda Race, I spotted and spoke to a friend who had crewed aboard what they call a “maxi”—a boat longer than the seventy-two feet permitted during my racing years. I asked if he had got on with the rest of the crew. He replied that half of them (there were eighteen) he had not even met during the passage.

The convention involving the *Patito* did not change. The operative day each week was Friday. We would gather at my house for a drink, and sometimes a look at the Weather Channel, though we could see the waters of Long Island Sound by looking out the window. The mate would have the boat ready, and soon after 6:30 P.M. we would set out for Long Island, usually Eatons Neck or Oyster Bay. In a hard southeaster we would sail east to Norwalk, or west to Greenwich. Depending on the wind, the sail would take an hour and a half or two hours. We had gotten used to a dry martini on arrival. Music was instantly at hand. “The Entertainment Committee never sleeps” was my mantra as I slid in a tape of Dick Wellstood or Claude Debussy. A half hour later the meal began to arrive, prepared at home but cooked by the mate. The mates changed every year, handily recruited mostly from nearby Yale—young men who lived in the area, knew how to sail, were anxious to do so, and welcomed the stipend. They

were quickly integrated into a Friday routine that usually ended with a game of poker and a swim.

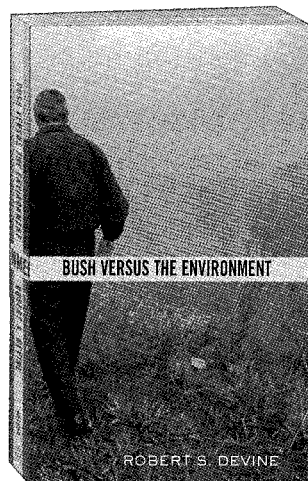
The *Patito* ventured out from the sound from time to time—to Bermuda (twice), to Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, to Saint John River in New Brunswick and thereabouts—but the Friday-evening sail, twenty years of it, was simply an organic part of my home schedule, and of my life, and the binds to friends deepened.

What happened when Michael told me he couldn't persevere with his duties was that everything I had correlatively planned for the August sail changed. I could not ferry the boat east, where I had thought to pick it up and sail in Passamaquoddy Bay and over to Digby, in Nova Scotia, and back to Saint John and up the enchanted river.

The crew needed recomposition. As I assimilated these alterations in plan, minuscule under the aspect of the heavens, my mind turned to the composite administrative infrastructure of owning a boat. Such concerns not only seem exiguous; they are that, really, especially if you can get some help. For some, boating is incomplete without the foreplay of sanding and painting and lubricating and all that. The satisfaction gotten from doing such things yourself, if ever you had it, diminishes as you get older. And then up there, up over the clouds, toward which you are gradually climbing, is the mountaintop from which, looking down over it all, you see for the first time ever the whole scene. And you have risked asking yourself that mortal question: Is the ratio of pleasure to effort holding its own? Or is effort creeping up, pleasure down? I mentioned giving up the piano. That actually happened to me, after a dilettante's lifetime of playing, even with nine (spotty) performances on stage as a harpsichord soloist. The fingers get rusty, the dividends are more laboriously achieved, the memory is shakier. One can putter on—or quit.

Piano playing (at normal speed and for normal lengths of time) is not a physical exertion; and as the master and commander progressively offloads the physical work at sea, exertion is minimal except when visibility attenuates, and wind and seas assert themselves. Then there is concentrated work and thinking to be done, and a measure of anxiety. But these aren't physically taxing, unless I have missed something that Freud et al. passed along. I resist the word “tedium,” because sailing can have so many rapturous moments, and there are accompanying pleasures. When you are in a harbor, there may be four congenial people around the table, eating and drinking and conversing, listening to music and smoking cigars, the wind and the hail and the temperature outside faced up to and faced down. Here, in your secure little anchorage, is a compound of life's social pleasures in the womb of nature. So, deciding that the time has come to sell the *Patito* and forfeit all that is not lightly done, and it brings to mind the step yet ahead, which is giving up life itself. ▀

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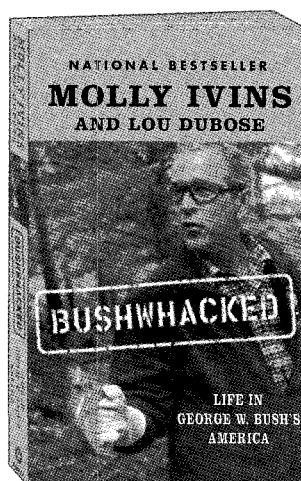
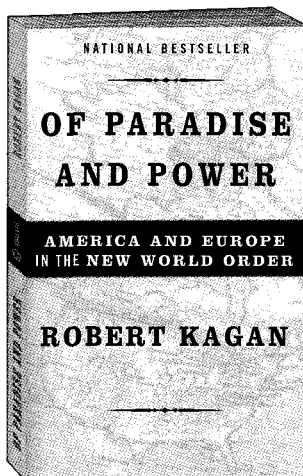
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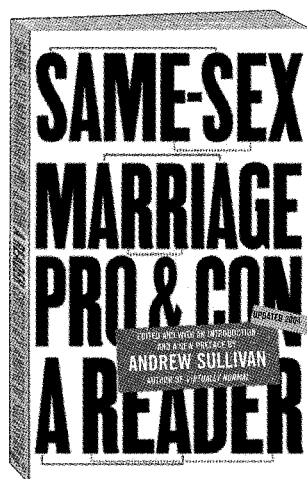
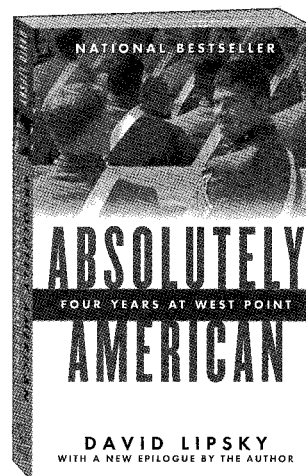
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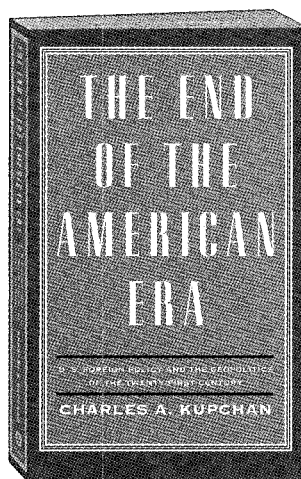


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The Kids Are All Right

Tom Carson considers three new books about U.S. teens and "our handiest analogy for virtually every social realm"—namely, high school: "For all I know, the people in today's military call it high school with guns—which, after *Columbine*, I realize may sound redundant."

PAGE 147

The Old Man

Leon Trotsky's life elicits "a sense of melancholy and waste" for Christopher Hitchens, reviewing Isaac Deutscher's "magnificent," recently reissued three-volume biography.

PAGE 152

Odd Couple

"Pauline [is] the hip, cool ringmaster who can jab you with a left lead quicker than you can count, and Susan just a bear, shuffling along in pursuit of a lightweight's speed and sizzle." David Thomson reviews

Sontag & Kael: *Opposites Attract Me*, by Craig Seligman.

PAGE 159

Laff Tracks

Four Souls, by Louise Erdrich, reviewed by Jon Zobenica

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The Terrors

"The most remarkable thing about the Soviet phenomenon," writes Robert Conquest in this review of Stalin: *The Court of the Red Tiger*, by Simon Sebag Montefiore, "was ... its extraordinarily successful effort to instill its falsifications in the minds of many abroad, who were under no compulsion to accept them."

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NEW & NOTEWORTHY

What to read this month

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

.....

Landon Carter and his fellow eighteenth-century Tidewater grandee William Byrd both famously left exhaustive and strikingly candid diaries that historians have long exploited. But these documents hardly speak for themselves, because their writers inhabited a mental world profoundly alien to our own. Rhys Isaac probes and interprets Carter's journals to reveal the attitudes and values of the Virginia gentry and the collapse of the established social order that attended the Colonies' rebellion against Britain. Isaac—who in his first book, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740–1790*, inventively adopted anthropological methods and approaches to examine the social, cultural, and political impact of evangelical Christianity on the colony—is a sensitive guide to Carter's world, and reading his systematic exploration is the only way for the layman to comprehend the diaries properly. He convincingly portrays Carter, one of Virginia's twelve richest men, as a figure ensnared by contradictions: In his energetic defense of American liberty, Carter appreciated that he was helping to destroy a hierarchical world to which he was intensely attached and which gave him enormous power and prestige. And just as he challenged the King's rule, so he found his slaves and his children defying his patriarchal authority and tearing the ties of dependence and obligation that bound them to him. In his diaries he's often furious and blustering—and invariably lacking in self-awareness—as he tries to reconcile one self-image as a stern patriarch and master with another as a caring, sentimental father and protector of the weak and dependent (the book reveals slavery to be a paradoxical institution—a paternalistic system built on the ever present threat of unlimited violence). Alas, though, the vagueness, pomposity, and self-consciously literary style that marred *The Transformation of Virginia* often render this book puzzling and highly annoying ("To be the historian who will present Landon Carter as a storyteller witness to the revolutions of his times is to be the scriptwriter and theater director of a major historical stage show. I shall introduce myself also ... I came into the world as one of identical twins, the first-born to kind and wise parents who never had much property but lived off their stock of learning as professional scientists")—and not infrequently threaten to make it unreadable.

Landon Carter's
UNEASY KINGDOM



LANDON CARTER'S
UNEASY KINGDOM

by Rhys Isaac
Oxford

Jack Greene's lengthy introduction to the two-volume diaries, which astutely assesses the political culture of the Virginia gentry during the revolutionary period, and was published separately as *Landon Carter* (1967), is a far more stylish biography; but Isaac's study, in spite of its intrusive qualities, is deeper and richer. To illuminate the tangled relationship between slaves and slaveholders in late Colonial and revolutionary Virginia, read also Philip D. Morgan's *Slave Counterpoint*, Sylvia R. Frey's *Water From the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age*, and Mechal Sobel's masterpiece of historical anthropology, *The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*.

LITERARY STUDIES

HATCHET JOBS, by Dale Peck (New Press). In these essays Peck rightly eviscerates contemporary "bombastic and befuddled" literary novelists who have defined and adhere to "a tradition that has grown increasingly esoteric and exclusionary, falsely intellectual and alienating to the mass of readers." He excoriates the *McSweeney's* crowd and "the ridiculous dithering of John Barth ... [and] the reductive cardboard constructions of Donald Barthelme," and would excise from the modern canon "nearly all of Caddis, Pynchon, DeLillo," and—while he's at it—"the diarrhetic flow of words that is *Ulysses* ... the incomprehensible ramblings of late Faulkner and the sterile inventions of late Nabokov." He correctly maintains that in writing "for one another rather than some more or less common reader," these writers have created a situation in which "the members of the educated bourgeoisie ... are sick and tired of feeling like they've somehow failed the modern novel." In his meticulous attention to diction, his savage wit, his exact and rollicking prose, his fierce devotion to stylistic and intellectual precision, and—of course—his disdain for pseudo-intellectual flatulence, Peck is Mencken's heir (although he's got to curb his lazy use of expletives). He writes that this collection marks the end of his hatchet jobs. For the sake

of the republic of letters, he'd better change his mind.

WESTERN AMERICANA AND NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY

THE NORTH AMERICAN PRAIRIE, by Stephen R. Jones and Ruth Carol Cushman (Peterson Field Guides/Houghton Mifflin). This book, replete with evocative photographs and informative maps, is a detailed and exceptionally well written guide to the wildlife, topography, and natural and human history of the Great Plains—an area that was once a sea of grass stretching from Ohio to Montana and from Texas to Alberta. The authors have been highly selective; they've chosen only forty-eight preserves in fifteen states and three Canadian provinces, which they consider the best examples of native prairie accessible



to the public. "Accessible" is a relative term; many of the places are especially remote in this, the loneliest region of the country. Bring the book along on a car trip out west this summer; get off the freeways and drive, say, Highway 3 across the Oklahoma Panhandle to see the light change abruptly from the soft, hazy glow of the East to the brilliance of the West; or Highway 20, past the Oglala National Grassland (site of the Northern Cheyennes' last battle) and through the Sandhills of western Nebraska as they undulate toward the Rockies; or Highway 12 through isolated Lemmon, South Dakota, to buck the unceasing wind in the Cedar River National Grasslands. Also pack the University of Nebraska Press's *The Definitive Journals of Lewis & Clark*; Francis Park-

man's *The Oregon Trail*; Mari Sandoz's *Crazy Horse*; Kathleen Norris's *Dakota*, her sublime meditation on Lemmon and the northern plains; and **THE CROW INDIANS**, by Robert H. Lowie (Nebraska). This reissue of a classic ethnographical study is based on the fieldwork and interviews with Crow elders Lowie conducted from 1907 to 1931. A twentieth-century anthropologist summoning a vanished nineteenth-century world of war parties and buffalo hunts, Lowie illuminated religious beliefs, relations between the sexes, and attitudes toward death and violence. And he proved a clear-eyed but generous observer; despite its occasional misinterpretations, this is perhaps the most well-rounded contemporary (or nearly so) account of traditional American Indian life on the Great Plains. It's especially enlightening because so much of our understanding of Plains Indians derives from the experience of the Sioux; this study examines their sworn enemy. It's a worthy addition to its publisher's list, which contains the most important collection of books on western and American Indian history.

WAR UNDER HEAVEN, by Gregory Evans Dowd (Johns Hopkins). The Plains Indians dominate the popular imagination, but the most creative books on the history of Native Americans—from the epics of Francis Parkman (still the greatest literary artist among American historians) to the more recent works of Francis Jennings and Richard White—have focused on economic and cultural relations, diplomacy, and warfare among the eastern and midwestern Indian tribes and the British, French, and Americans. Dowd's account of Pontiac's War examines the nearly three-year intertribal uprising, begun in 1763, against the British—a conflict ranging over what is now Pennsylvania to Arkansas, Wisconsin to South Carolina. Shifting from councils at frontier outposts to deliberations at Whitehall, Dowd elucidates the contradictions in British policy toward Indian sovereignty that helped ignite the conflict (contradictions, he convincingly argues, that continued to define and confound relations between the United States and

Native American tribes). His explication of both sides' strategies and tactics in this ferocious struggle (the British used smallpox as a biological weapon against the Delaware; the Indians used terror against settlers to disrupt the British forces' supply lines) is both sober and gripping. And, in perhaps his most original contribution, he skillfully uses the perforce meager evidence to analyze the religious dimension of the Indians' resistance. A stylish writer with a talent for compression, Dowd engages and advances scholarly debates while making the lines of those debates clear to the general reader. His book (the paperback edition has just been released) is the best account of its subject. Dowd shows how cunning British diplomacy exploited divisions among the tribes to stem the uprising, but the contest for the lands from the Alleghenies to the Mississippi wasn't really decided until the United States crushed Tecumseh's pan-tribal uprising in 1813. Readers wanting to put Pontiac's War in its widest context should pair this elegant book with White's sweeping *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815*.

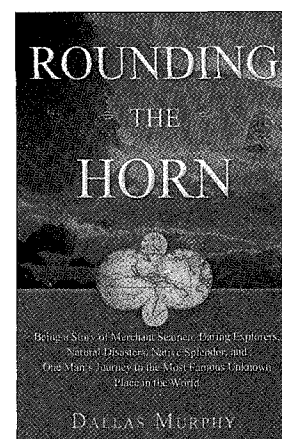
EUROPEAN HISTORY

Yet again we're bombarded with military history: this season three trade publishers have each issued a heralded title on the First World War. The one written by the best-known, best-selling author and published by the most prestigious house—**EUROPE'S LAST SUMMER: WHO STARTED THE GREAT WAR IN 1914?**, by David Fromkin (Knopf)—is easily the weakest. Still, although Fromkin conducted no archival research, he's fairly well acquainted with the historiography of his subject (the diplomatic maneuvering and the military preparations directly preceding the conflict), and he therefore avoids the worst flaws that plague popular history. Furthermore, his case, though written in purplish prose, is largely correct. Fromkin asserts (contrary to a version of events promulgated by Barbara Tuchman, in *The Guns of August*, and still tenaciously adhered to by some high school teachers and many political

scientists committed to using history to bolster their preconceived notions of international crisis management) that the war's outbreak in 1914 wasn't a colossal accident but, rather, the immediate result of German and Austro-Hungarian provocation. And although for decades scholars have widely accepted this view (the book is hardly the "dramatic reassessment" its publisher promises), it has failed to penetrate the popular imagination, so it's a case in need of wider dissemination. But this book is thin and crude—it reads far more like a lawyer's brief than a historical exegesis. And because his simplistic approach is so unanalytical, Fromkin overstates and underargues his thesis.

In 2001 the Oxford historian Hew Strachan published *To Arms*, the first volume of his projected scholarly three-volume study of the war—a work that promises to be the definitive general history for a generation, and one that will judiciously and exhaustively explore nearly every aspect of the conflict, from finance to ideology to diplomacy to armaments. Sadly, **THE FIRST WORLD WAR**, by Hew Strachan (Viking), isn't a one-volume summary of that yet to be completed work but, rather, is based on Strachan's ten-program documentary on the war for British television. It suffers from its genesis. Strachan writes vigorously, but whereas in *To Arms* he deftly married acute analysis with a magisterial narrative, here he regularly gets bogged down in his storytelling, which renders the book somewhat bloated and unfocused. Moreover, in an attempt to highlight the global dimensions of this struggle, Strachan devotes considerable attention to the conflict waged in Africa and western Asia, which in a short work serves to underemphasize the war on the Western Front—indisputably the crucial theater.

It's a shame that **CATAclysm: THE FIRST WORLD WAR AS POLITICAL TRAGEDY**, by David Stevenson (Basic), by far the best title of this lot (in fact, the best single-volume history of the war ever published), will almost certainly win less attention than the other books. Too often popularizers write shallow history books that, thanks

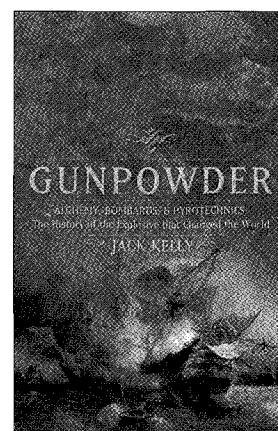


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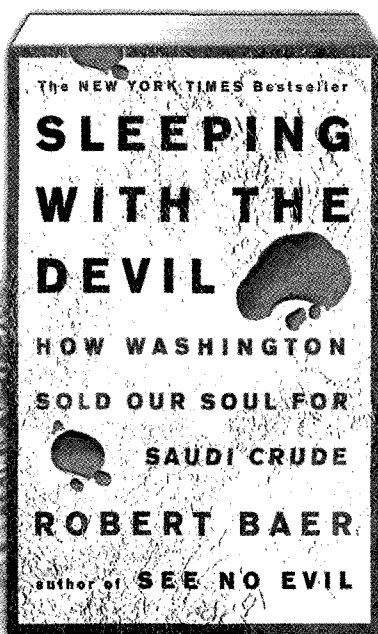
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to the cachet and publicity that only a fancy trade publisher can bestow, receive unwarrantedly favorable reviews. But just as often first-rate scholars are seduced by their misplaced ambitions to be Big Thinkers and Important Writers. They stray too far from their area of expertise and engage in pretentiously written, self-important speculation. In contrast Stevenson, a historian at the London School of Economics and the author of both a superb monograph on French war aims and the definitive study of the pre-war arms race, has now written with verve and precision an exceedingly smart, analytical history of a hugely important subject. He manages to assess the most complex and controversial issues—such as pre-war military plans and diplomacy; popular attitudes before and during the struggle; the evolution of war aims; the impact of the war on domestic politics; the relationship among tactics, technology, and strategy; and the economic, diplomatic, political, and social consequences of the peace—with both nuance and bracing authority. His book—long, dense, complex, but brisk and animated by a consistently penetrating and commanding intelligence—contains among the most incisive and levelheaded historical expositions I've encountered. For example, Stevenson's characterization of both the perspicacity and the limitations of British policymakers on the eve of the war ("They were probably justified in their gloomy reading of German ambitions, but they underestimated—like everyone else—the cost of frustrating them") is a commonsensical implicit response to Niall Ferguson's brilliant but wrongheaded 1999 book *The Pity of War*. Stevenson, like most historians today, believes that Germany and Austria-Hungary provoked "a Balkan war" and accepted "the risk that it would escalate into a European one" (an interpretation more intricate and more accurate than Fromkin's). But he sees the war as a tragedy—a word almost always grossly misused, though Stevenson applies it with exactitude: all the powers willingly entered a general conflict because they saw the alternatives as worse. And one of Stevenson's greatest accomplishments is to make

clear why the citizens and leaders of Britain, France, and Germany chose four years of unprecedented slaughter over capitulation or any conceivable negotiated resolution.

How the British army grappled with that obscenely costly stalemate on the Western Front is the subject of **THE KILLING GROUND**, by *Tim Travers* (Pen & Sword), originally published in 1987, long out of print, and recently reissued in a paperback edition—which is marvelous news, because this is among the most creative works of military history of the past quarter century, and was for years an exasperatingly expensive and hard to find title. Travers explores how Britain's high command confronted, and failed to confront, a war that refused to resemble its preordained structure, and how the military adapted, and failed to adapt, its ideas, tactics, ethos, and organization to what he calls "the internal logic hidden within weapons such as machine-guns and tanks." Scholarship examining British military leadership in the Great War has too often been divided between those who condemn the high command as unimaginative and even criminally negligent "donkeys" and those who defend it. Travers goes beyond such facile judgments to show why it was so difficult psychologically and institutionally to overcome considered and intelligent, if erroneous, ideas and to adjust to radically changing circumstances and technologies (I've long thought this study of organizational innovation and the factors that frustrate it should find its way into the curricula of schools of management). Travers sheds light on subjects seemingly far removed from the Western Front, including Britain's pre- and post-war social structure and the cultural impact of war, by elucidating how the military's accommodation to the full ramifications of new technologies would have demanded wide-reaching and uncontrollable changes in the country's social hierarchy (a development that began to unfold only in the Second World War, when Orwell discerned it and prophesied its consequences in *The Lion and the Unicorn*). ■

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor and national editor of The Atlantic.



BOOKS

THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT

Teens aren't as warped as some of the books about them

BY TOM CARSON

.....

In no other culture does secondary education evoke the enchantment and trauma that high school does for Americans. As the single collective experience that most of us in this diffuse society are likeliest to share, it's also our handiest analogy for virtually every social realm we encounter as adults, no matter how exalted. Showbiz? High school with money, *People* and *Entertainment Weekly* tell us. Politics? High school with power—and man, could Grover Norquist use a wedge. For all I know, the people in today's military call it high school with guns—which, after *Columbine*, I realize may sound redundant.

The basic difference is that our fellow developed countries treat secondary school as the beginning of responsibility. If little Jean-Pierre's fate is to be a mechanic, the stench of cooked goose is mingling with the incipient reek of motor oil by the time he turns fifteen. But for American teens high school is the beginning of freedom—their first crack at

making choices. The autonomy involved is restricted, though not as much as parents might wish, and its purposes are generally frivolous—from the outside, anyhow. But the project of self-definition thus gotten under way is neither.

Consciously or not, we take it so much for granted that high school is a *social* education, with the formal kind eating dust, that we have no idea how exotic a spectacle it presents to the rest of the planet. "I always thought all of the notions about cliques and crowds, and the preoccupation with fashions that I had seen in American movies was the invention of Hollywood," says a Turkish grad student quoted in Murray Milner Jr.'s *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids*. "Then when I came to the U.S. for the first time as an exchange student my junior year in secondary school, I was stunned to see that many of the images actually existed." Perhaps predictably, a professor from Germany, hearing our author expatiate on "the importance of parties and

proms," gets downright icy: "We don't have that kind of thing in our schools; we tend to business."

I have to admit it took a lot out of me not to transcribe that "we" as "ve," and you'd like to imagine it took something out of Milner, too. But good sociologist that he is, he gets sheepish about even including "this very anecdotal information." For the reader, its inclusion is a blessed interlude—one of several when a topic more intriguing than the one he's beaver away at fleetingly materializes. High school as American exceptionalism in the bang of a locker is a fetching idea, but unfortunately, Milner's specialty is pecking orders: his best-known work, *Status and Sacredness* (1994), examined India's caste system. As his eye turns to pseudonymous "Woodrow Wilson High," he believes he's detected an intriguing resemblance: "Both Indian castes and adolescent subcultures are systems in which status is the key resource." This is certainly stop-the-presses stuff; dare he go further? He does: "I am claiming that what I have learned about how status systems operate from studying castes significantly clarifies what goes on in our high schools." In other words, teen social hierarchies exist; he's got the field reports to prove it. Unless you were

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home-schooled, it's not easy to share his intellectual excitement. In fact, you may feel like a citizen of Newcastle watching the coal caravan pull up.

Not that I mean to be rude, but does any other discipline depend so much on vaunting its own methodology—especially when it's being used to confirm the obvious? As he shares the results of his painstaking investigations (adolescents seem to care a lot about clothes), Milner doesn't want anyone to be confused by his subject's arcana. Cheerleading, he explains, "usually involve[s] a mixture of verbal phrases and routinized physical movement," and you wonder: *Usually?* What in hell do the exceptions do—kick a possum to death in stony silence? (And by the way, does their team win?) On a bolder note, here's Milner analyzing high school gossip: "It is clear that rumors can be an integral part of gossip ... the tone of rumors and gossip is usually negative." A paragraph later he suffers a brief and endearing crisis of confidence: "Of course," he admits, "most people intuitively 'know all of this.'" The quotation marks are the charm.

Yet "all of this" is just window dressing, because Milner has a larger thesis to share—or, rather, since it's only tenuously connected to much of the behavior he elaborates, a rant. People in his field aren't known for picking their subjects in order to whoop it up about this wonderful world, so it may go without saying that he finds teen rivalries, faddishness, and in-groups pernicious. The two epigraphs from Rousseau (yes, really; it's kind of sweet) give you one guess as to the villain: the false values of our competitive, acquisitive consumer society. "Perhaps the thing that American secondary education teaches most effectively is a desire to consume," Milner asserts early on, and 150-odd pages later, the case still unproved, he's only grown more insistent: "I am suggesting that high school status systems have played an important role in the development of con-

sumerism in the United States." Note that both sentences are structured to slide over the niggling question of agency.

I'm no great capitalism booster myself, and I'm more than sympathetic with some of Milner's specific beefs. A generation ago only a satirist would have imagined corporate logos and junk-food vending machines on school premises. But to reduce adolescent behavior to consumerism alone, or to status-seeking alone, discredits the loose and variegated social order that emerges even from this monotonous study. (I suppose stoners are consumers in a sense, but I doubt that's really what Milner has in mind.) Don't we all understand that

high schoolers' self-devised categories and peer come-uppances, including the petty cruelties Milner deplores, are just tools for the basic project of adolescence, which is a hunt for identity? In his preface he confesses to being "a bit amazed" that he came to respect and like (I assume that's what he means by "enjoy") the students who participated in his research. But you can't help thinking they'd be better off not going to Uncle Murray with their problems, since he immediately warns

us that he's not going to get sticky about it—his focus is on their "strategic importance for my intellectual concerns and for the operation of our society." In that order? Doesn't he have tenure?

To be fair, Milner does understand that one basic reason high school kids get fixated on evaluating one another is that making up their own yardsticks for what's cool and what isn't is their only source of power. Yet when prescription time rolls around, which you kind of knew it would, he unsurprisingly turns out to be that familiar figure, the progressive as Martian. High school is a reckoning not least because adolescents need it to be, and he's unable to grasp that any mandated substitute for teen-dom's self-invented rules and ordeals misses the point. There's a positively Kucinichian cluelessness to his calls for introducing—imposing, actually—"norms

FREAKS, GEEKS, AND COOL KIDS: AMERICAN TEENAGERS, SCHOOLS, AND THE CULTURE OF CONSUMPTION

by Murray Milner Jr.
Routledge

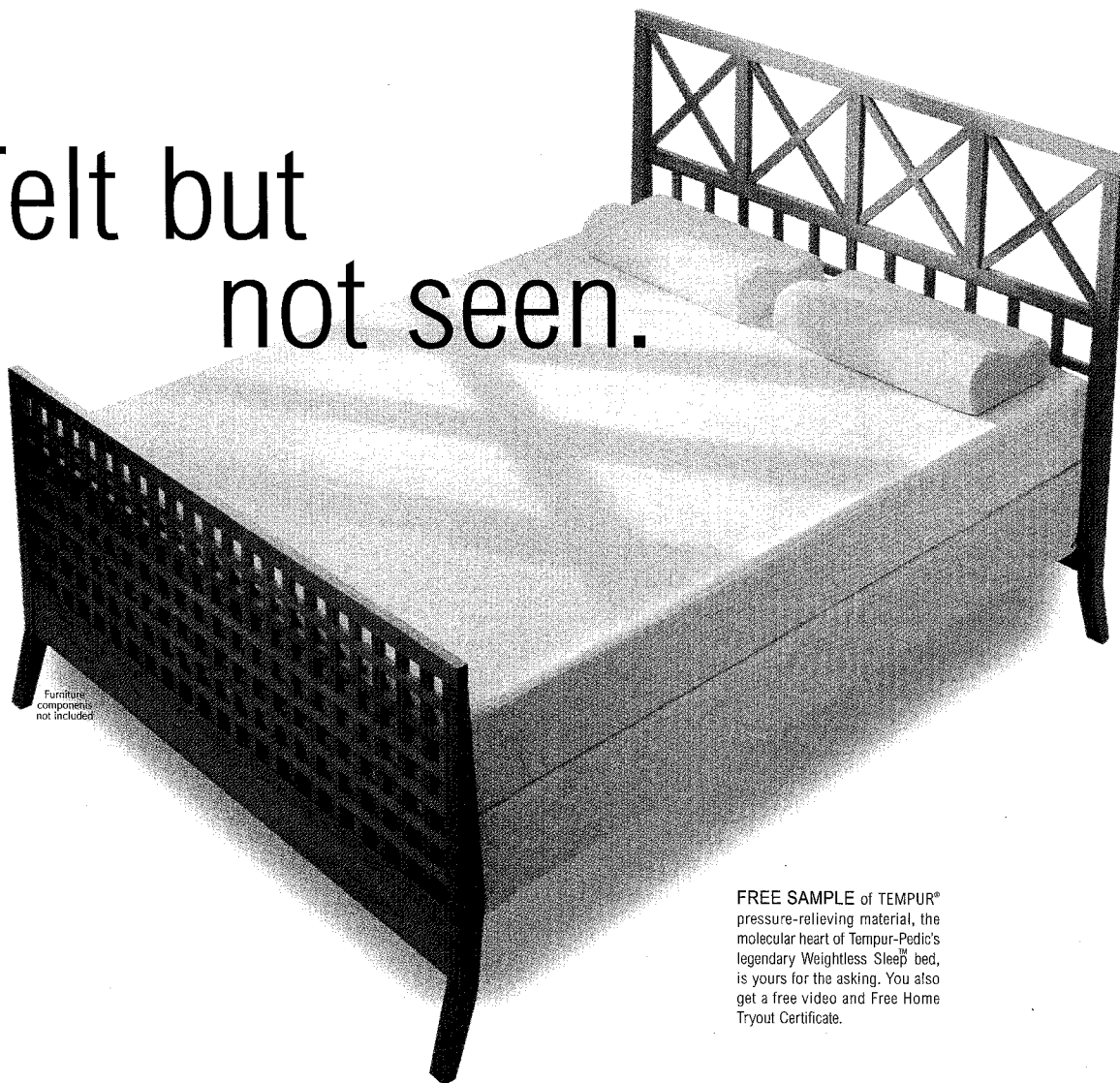
TEEN TV: GENRE, CONSUMPTION AND IDENTITY

edited by Glyn Davis
and Kay Dickinson
BFI Publishing

WONDERLAND: A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF AN AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL

by Michael Bamberger
Atlantic Monthly Press

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emphasizing solidarity and equality rather than inferiority and superiority” (his italics). Some of Milner’s pet notions are unwittingly delightful, though. After a modest proposal to break up those evil cliques by assigning rotating seats at lunch hour, he suggests that students might object *less* “if this was made part of a graded educational process.” They could be “required to interview and report on the cultural background of two students they had never talked with.” Like little sociologists!

Then again, at least Milner is trying to be of use; he’s an old-fashioned kind of foggy that way. The contributors to the British academics Glyn Davis and Kay Dickinson’s anthology *Teen TV*, in contrast, are the kind of cultural-studies semiotics junkies for whom establishing the purpose of their analysis would be hopelessly quaint. If you haven’t seen, say, *Dawson’s Creek* or *Smallville*, you might never guess from this baker’s dozen of feminist, queer-theory, and truth-or-Derrida glosses that teen soaps are entertainment—fairly frothy, at that—and not the Dead Sea Scrolls. I’ve written a good deal about teen TV myself; I think it’s some of the richest programming around—far more expressive and socially acute than all the dreary cop and legal dramas cluttering up adult-oriented prime time. But I wouldn’t give a damn about these shows’ undercurrents if I weren’t first and foremost entertained, and I’ve never understood the point of reducing a show as ingeniously conceived and witty as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to a “text” whose enjoyability is irrelevant to its meanings—meanings that in this kind of criticism are always inadvertent, and hence the critic’s “discoveries,” even though every adolescent who’s seen *Buffy* knows (and relishes) how highly self-conscious it is.

The comedy of most of *Teen TV*’s essays is that their authors are obviously addicted to this stuff as the cotton candy it is. Even in academia nobody becomes an expert on *Party of Five* out of selfless intellectual zeal. It’s just that admitting as much might give their work a dangerous human dimension, tempting us to mistake them for fans or something equally ignoble. Funnier still, the pea

under their mattresses of jargon turns out to be that schoolmarm favorite, the belief that art should be pedagogic; the shows are essentially evaluated for their benefits as propaganda. For the conversion of drool into claptrap, it’s hard to top Matt Hills, of Cardiff University, on the protagonists of dewy *Dawson’s Creek*: “If the Dawson/Joey (D/J) relationship is viewed as a rather unremarkable pop-cultural representation of ‘true love,’ then what might we make of the show’s transition into (and back out of) a Joey/Pacey (J/P) relationship?” One thing we might make of it is that Hills spent a few lonesome nights in Cardiff rooting for Pacey to score.

After suffering through Milner’s dehumanized concern and *Teen TV*’s identity-politics inanities, it’s a relief to turn to a book that’s at least competently written. Far from being only that, Michael Bamberger’s vivid, engaging *Wonderland* is both the perfect corrective to the invidious abstractions of *Freaks, Geeks, and Cool Kids* and—hello, *Dawson’s Creek*—something of a real-life teen soap; its intertwined storylines and folkloric personalities certainly draw you in the same way. A reporter for *Sports Illustrated*, Bamberger spent the 2002–2003 school year embedded in Pennsbury High, an economically diverse (straddling Levittown and more-upscale areas), racially homogenous (85 percent white) Bucks County, Pennsylvania, school whose elaborate senior prom has become both an all-around community celebration and a regional legend. Unlike Cameron Crowe’s *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, the book isn’t a stunt; that is, Bamberger didn’t pass himself off as anything other than a journalist. He must be a wizard at bonding, though. *Wonderland* isn’t just an uncommonly rich and intimate look at high school life; it’s the best piece of decent-minded, unpatronizing Americana I’ve read since Jim Wilson’s Vietnam-themed *The Sons of Bardstown* (1994).

What’s attractive about the students, teachers, parents, and administrators whose lives Bamberger tracked is that they’re at once eternal types and idiosyncratic, surprising individuals, from Pennsbury’s longtime principal, Mr. Katz—conscientious and devoted, but so re-

cessive that the door to his private office lacks an outside knob—to star athlete Bobby Speer, who finds out he's not a good enough quarterback to interest Division I college recruiters. It's impossible not to be touched by, among others, homecoming queen Alyssa Bergman, who visits an assistant principal after she's crowned to earnestly ask what her "special responsibilities" are—visiting hospitalized children? distributing food to the poor? Best of all, and clearly Bamberger's favorite, is go-getting junior Bob Costa, an irrepressible fast-talker who wangles his way into everything from interviewing Patti LaBelle at a Philadelphia Eagles game to shaking hands with Bill Clinton.

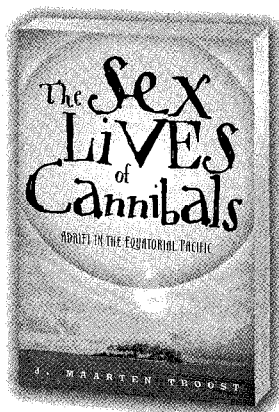
The prom, inevitably, is the clinching event, but the beauty of the book is that nothing especially remarkable happens once we get there. The episodes along the way are the story, from unexpected tragedies—it's a shock when one promising student Bamberger's been following gets killed in a car accident in Florida—to equally unexpected moments of glory, particularly the scene in which a skinny, unprepossessing senior named Jeff Heinbach musters up the nerve to challenge the visiting district congressman, Republican Jim Greenwood, on his support for the Iraq War. (Greenwood's disdainful reply to the upstart got him in hot water with the local media and turned Heinbach into a Pennsbury hero.)

Bamberger's treatment of the kids is very gentle and—so one assumes, anyway—discreet. We're told in general terms that Pennsbury has its share of promiscuity and drug use, but with only one or two murky exceptions, nobody's shown doing anything scandalous. We also aren't introduced to anybody particularly unsympathetic, which certainly doesn't tally with my high school memories. But otherwise it's nice to learn that the old verities still apply. These teens aren't status-hungry, consumerist little vipers in the making; they're engaged in the same round of small defeats, gratifying discoveries, and struggles for self-articulation as ever. One way you know *Wonderland* is true to their experience is that it's all about learning—and I can't recall a single scene set in a classroom. **A**

Tom Carson is a columnist for *GQ* and the author of *Gilligan's Wake*, a novel.

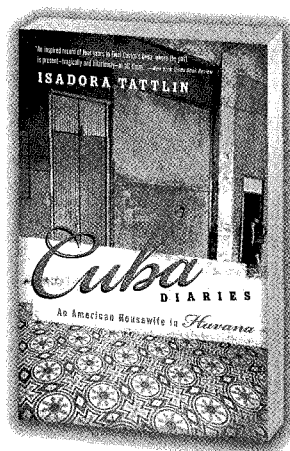
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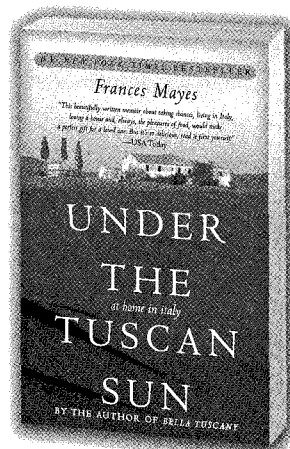
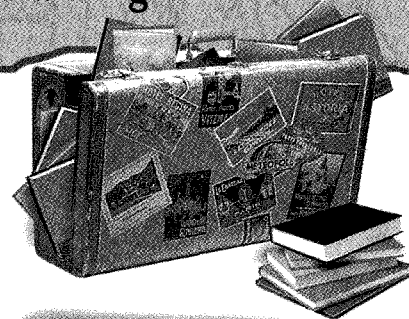
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THE OLD MAN

Even for educated readers, Leon Trotsky survives as part kitsch and part caricature. But the reissue of a majestic biography reveals him as he always was—a prophetic moralist

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

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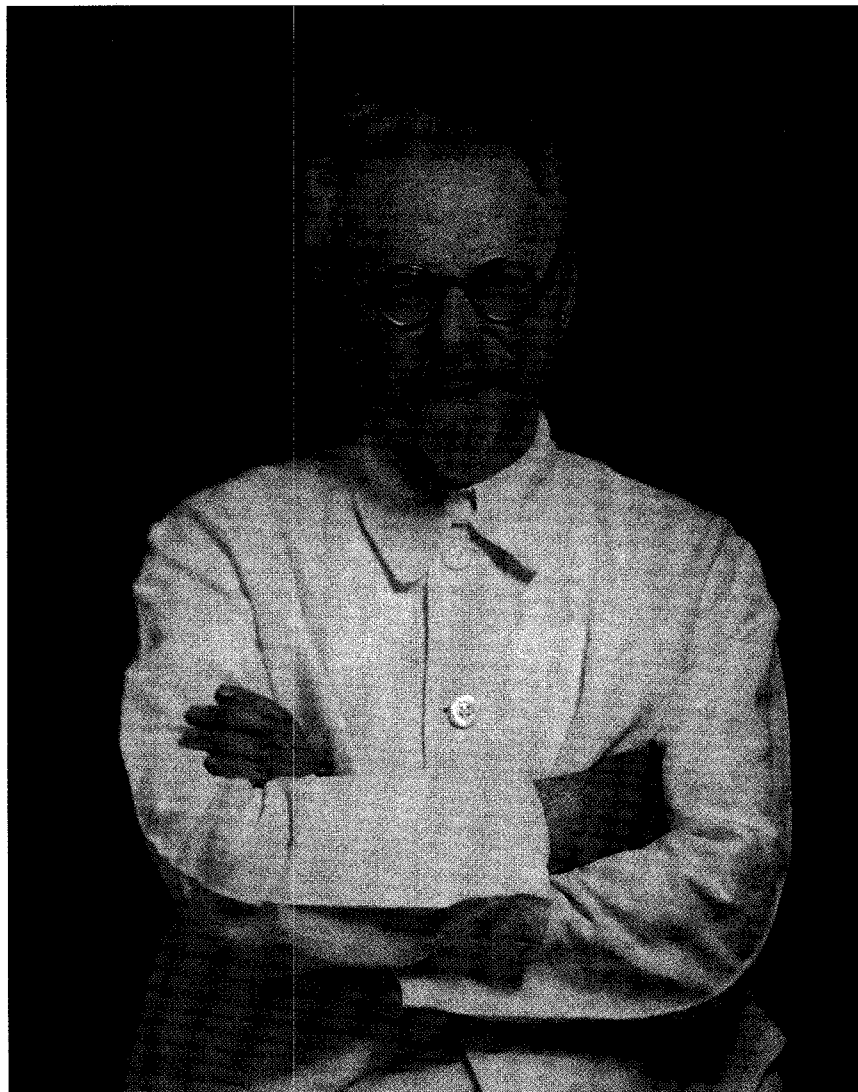
Two images have been with me throughout the writing of this essay. Between them they seem to show the alternative paths for the intellectual. The one is of J. M. Keynes, the other of Leon Trotsky. Both were obviously men of attractive personality and great natural gifts. The one the intellectual guardian of the established order, providing new policies and theories of manipulation to keep our society in what he took to be economic trim, and making a personal fortune in the process. The other, outcast as a revolutionary from Russia both under the Tsar and under Stalin, providing throughout his life a defense of human activity, of the powers of conscious and rational human effort. I think of them at the end, Keynes with his peerage, Trotsky with an icepick in his skull. They are the twin lives between which intellectual choice in our society lies. —Alasdair MacIntyre, "Breaking the Chains of Reason," in *Out of Apathy* (1960)

Yet, precisely like a personage in classical tragedy, Trotsky did not act to arrest, to defeat, the dangers he foresaw. Clairvoyance and policy drew apart, as if doom, seen as a historical process, had its irresistible fascination. He stumbled on, majestic. One thinks of Eteocles going clear-sighted to the death gate in the *Seven Against Thebes*, refusing the plea of the chorus for evasion or liberty of action:

We are already past the care of gods.
For them our death is the
admirable offering.
Why then delay, fawning upon
our doom.

—George Steiner, "Trotsky and the Tragic Imagination" (1966)

Alasdair MacIntyre and George Steiner—the authors, respectively, of *After Virtue* and *Antigones*—have both evolved a good deal since they wrote those lines. But if either of them was again to need a figure to represent dissent and defiance, or the fusion of the man of ideas with the man of action, or the wandering interna-



nationalist, he might be drawn once more to the character of Trotsky. Of no other participant in the Bolshevik-Marxist battles of the twentieth century could this really be said to be the case. Lenin is stranded in time and place, as are Mao and Ho Chi Minh. Stalin is annexed to the general study of pathological dictatorship. Combative and brilliant intellectuals such as Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Gramsci, and Nikolai Bukharin are for specialists, and were localized before they were defeated. Fidel Castro has at least made it into the twenty-first century, but at the price of becoming a bloated and theatrical caricature. Only Che Guevara retains a hint of charisma, and he made no contribution whatsoever to the battle of theories and ideas. The three succeeding portraits on

the covers of this trilogy (which originally appeared volume by volume in 1954, 1959, and 1963) show the ardent young radical journalist and activist, the more mature Soviet tactician and commander of the Red Army, and the snowy-headed exiled sage. To have had a part in two revolutions, wrote Thomas Paine, was to have lived to some purpose. Trotsky took a leading part in the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, and also in many other political and military upheavals, from the Balkans to China, and was perhaps the most prescient writer of his day in warning of the true menace of National Socialism. Yet his most enduring and tenacious battle was against the monstrous regime that had resulted from his earlier exertions.

THE PROPHET ARMED:
TROTSKY 1879–1921

THE PROPHET
UNARMED: TROTSKY
1921–1929

THE PROPHET OUTCAST:
TROTSKY 1929–1940

by Isaac Deutscher
Verso

It is this, combined with the revolutionary credentials that he possessed, that helps explain the large footprint of Trotsky and Trotskyism among intellectuals. To start with a few American examples, Trotsky makes a magnetizing appearance in Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March*. He caused Mary McCarthy to write one of her most penetrating essays ("My Confession"), about herd behavior in the radical smart set. Clement Greenberg partly founded his seminal article "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" on a passage from Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution*. Norman Mailer acknowledges as his own political inspiration a Trotskyisant maverick named Jean Malaquais. Shift the scene a little, and we have no difficulty deciphering the figure of Emmanuel Goldstein in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four*, or in recognizing the secret "book within a book" in that novel (*The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism*), as a derivative of Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed*. Nearer the present time, the hero of Milan Kundera's *The Joke* has only to write "Long Live Trotsky!" on a postcard in order to find out precisely how, why, and when a "joke" under communism has gone too far.

Nor was this the only nervous establishment that found him a specter difficult to exorcise. Winston Churchill, in an acidulated portrait in *Great Contemporaries*, depicted Trotsky even in impotent exile as having been the "ogre" of international subversion. (He perhaps could not forgive one of the two men to have outgeneraled him in the field, the other being Kemal Atatürk.) A.J.P. Taylor tells the story of how an Austro-Hungarian minister, upon being warned by a nervous colleague that a too-precipitate war with Russia in 1914 might mean revolution, demanded to know who would lead this revolution: "Herr Trotsky of the Café Centrale?" (Trotsky's time in the cafés of Vienna was not wasted.) In late 1939 the French ambassador Robert Coulondre had his last meeting with Hitler before the coming of war. The Führer was in a boastful mood, Coulondre recalled in his memoir, having just concluded a pact with Stalin, and spoke of the inevitability of further triumphs. The ambassador sought to sober him by warning

of the unintended consequences of conflict. "You are thinking of yourself as victor," Coulondre said, "but have you given thought to another possibility—that the victor may be Trotsky?" Hitler leaped to his feet, as if "he had been hit in the pit of the stomach," and yelled that this threat was reason enough in itself for Britain and France to capitulate at once. It would be amusing to know if Churchill ever learned of this conversation.

Most haunting of all, perhaps, was the moment when Trotsky, hounded from country to country, was ordered by the Norwegian government in 1936 to move on. An agitation against him had been started by Moscow's agents, who had not yet made their pact with Hitler, and by Vidkun Quisling, the leader of the Norwegian Fascists, whose name would later become synonymous with collaboration. The invertebrate Social-Democratic government of Trygve Lie, who was subsequently the founding secretary-general of the United Nations, caved in and told Trotsky to stop writing or else submit to deportation. Trotsky told these gentlemen,

This is your first act of surrender to Nazism in your own country. You will pay for this. You think yourselves secure and free to deal with a political exile as you please. But the day is near—remember this!—the day is near when the Nazis will drive you from your country, all of you.

"After less than four years," as Isaac Deutscher records in relating this episode, "the same government had indeed to flee from Norway before the Nazi invasion; and as the Ministers and their aged King Haakon stood on the coast, huddled together and waiting anxiously for a boat that was to take them to England, they recalled with awe Trotsky's words as a prophet's curse come true."

I find I want to add Deutscher's comment on the memoir of Ambassador Coulondre mentioned above: "Thus, the master of the Third Reich and the envoy of the Third Republic, in their last manoeuvres, during the last hours of peace, sought to intimidate each other, and each other's governments, by invoking the name of the lonely outcast trapped and immured at the far end of

the world." This is a majestic, sonorous collection, written in the stern and judging manner of the Talmudic scholar that Deutscher had been and the Marxist polymath that he became, and of Thomas Carlyle, whose study of Cromwell he so esteemed. (One must also marvel at the way in which Deutscher mastered the English language almost as late in life as his fellow Pole Joseph Conrad.) The *Prophet* trilogy strives to reconcile the materialist conception of history with the importance of the "great man," and though the trope of prophecy armed and unarmed is taken from the sixth chapter of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, it would be a dull ear that did not also detect the cadences of the Pentateuch.

To re-read this magnificent trilogy today, however, is to be overcome by a sense of melancholy and waste. Writing just as official "de-Stalinisation" was spreading across Russia and Eastern Europe, Isaac Deutscher was sure that Trotsky would be vindicated by history and rehabilitated in the Communist world. Nothing of the sort was to happen: communism proved itself able to adapt but not to reform, and "Trotskyism" remained one of the few unpardonable heresies of which a dissident on the other side of the Iron Curtain could be accused. Deutscher himself could not abandon the idea that the nations of the Warsaw Pact represented some version of progress—a quasi new order worth defending until the day when the workers recovered their senses and demanded "real" Bolshevism instead. Of the actual rebellions against Stalinism, in East Germany, Hungary, and Poland, he was contemptuous, writing "Eastern Europe found itself almost on the brink of bourgeois restoration at the end of the Stalin era; and only Soviet armed power (or the threat) stopped it there."

In the theoretical magazine of the post-Trotskyist *groupuscule* of which I was once a member, a learned commentary on this and other writings of his appeared, titled "The End of the Road: Deutscher's Capitulation to Stalinism." Deutscher did not live to see the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia (he died in the fall of 1967), but I think by then he might have preferred even "bourgeois restoration" to the communism of the Panzers.

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Thus this mighty work of reflection and engagement is to a large extent the record of great debates that apparently no longer matter to us. The split between Menshevik and Bolshevik, the dispute over collectivization and industrialization, the polemics concerning Karl Kautsky and Georgi Plekhanov and Otto Bauer—all of these have come to appear as arcane as the strife over the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. There are some haunting and visceral moments to be added to the ones I cited above: the massacre of the oppositionists in the gulag and the hunting down of Trotsky's most distant relatives was exhaustively examined by Deutscher long before many modern historians had taken the full measure of Stalinism. And two major episodes, one of them under-represented and one of them described beautifully, repay more-intense scrutiny.

his mind, though I can't be sure of any direct influence in this case.) But when the tide went the other way, and it was the turn of Bulgarians to suffer, he was no less trenchant and truthful. He saw that all parties in the conflict were being manipulated by the "Great" Powers in a cynical rehearsal for a larger war, and he believed that in all the contending countries there were healthy democratic and socialist elements that could rise above crudity and superstition. At the time, this was not merely a sentimental opinion. There actually were such forces. Their panic and capitulation in 1914, and the Europe-wide surrender of the Social Democrats to kings and emperors and generals, was for Trotsky the greatest imaginable tragedy, even if it did provide the opportunity for revolution.

Trotsky's second great moral moment was to occur during a repeat perform-

Trotsky took a leading part in the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, and in many other upheavals. Yet his most tenacious battle was against the monstrous regime that had resulted from his earlier exertions.

The first of these is Trotsky's coverage of the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913. Writing at a time when Titoism appeared secure, Deutscher devoted little space to the ethno-nationalist bloodbaths that had convulsed the region and helped to bring on the great catastrophe of the First World War. He gave a rather spare account of Trotsky's work in the area, which was undertaken as a journalistic project for a liberal Russian newspaper at a time when Trotsky himself had not become a full-fledged Bolshevik. These dispatches from the front lines in Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria are actually among the finest war-correspondent files of all time. Trotsky was first of all most suspicious of the pan-Slavic prejudices of his "own" side, and hastened to inform Russian readers of the cruelties inflicted by the people of the Orthodox cross on the people of the Turkish crescent. He lampooned Russian and Bulgarian chauvinism as it had not been lampooned since Tolstoy ridiculed it in *Anna Karenina*. (The great examples of Russian literature were never far from

ance of this capitulation, which occurred nearly two decades later. As Hitler was advancing toward power in Germany, the European left once again abandoned its nerve and its principles, and declined to make common cause. The most depraved offender was Stalin's Communist International, which insisted that the Social Democrats were a greater enemy than the Nazis, and which implied that a victory by Hitler would merely clear the way for a Communist triumph. In a series of articles that really do vibrate with the tones of Cassandra, Trotsky inveighed against this mixture of ugly realpolitik and cretinous irresponsibility. The late Irving Howe once described those articles collectively as the finest polemic of all time. I am not sure that I would go so far, but it is very difficult to re-read them even today without a tingling in the scalp and a lump in the throat. Better than Freud or Reich (or Churchill), Trotsky intuited the sheer psychopathic element that underlay the mass appeal of fascism. Much of what he wrote was by analogy, and reflected

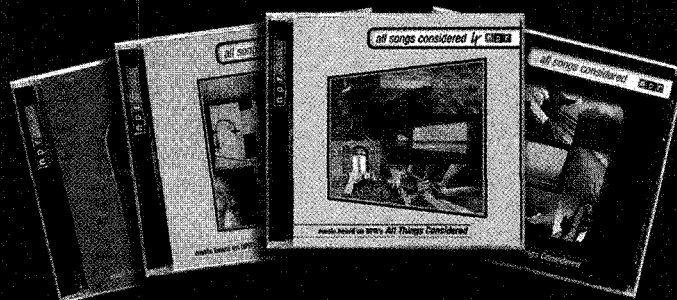
his old obsession with the decay of the French Revolution ("Fascism is a caricature of Jacobinism"). But as the full seizure of power by the Nazis became imminent, and as Stalin colluded with it more and more openly, he abandoned mere class analysis, as in the following passage:

Today, not only in peasant homes but also in the city sky-scrapers, there lives alongside the twentieth century the tenth or thirteenth. A hundred million people use electricity and still believe in the magic power of signs and exorcism ... What inexhaustible reserves they possess of darkness, ignorance and savagery! Despair has raised them to their feet; fascism has given them the banner. Everything that should have been eliminated from the national organism in the ... course of the unhindered development of society comes out today gushing from the throat: capitalist society is puking up the undigested barbarism. Such is the physiology of National Socialism.

Trotsky would have scorned to stress his own Jewishness in this situation. When he wrote that "Einstein has been obliged to pitch his tent outside the boundaries of Germany," he was alluding to the vulgar Nazi contempt for disinterested, rational scientific endeavor. But he partly understood that anti-Semitism was a harbinger, or predictive symptom, of something much worse than unchecked warfare. He had experienced the same premonitions in some of Stalin's viler attacks on him. Now, he thought, there was a real danger of a war not of mass destruction alone but of mass extermination.

His essays from this terrifying moment are worth re-reading not just for their prescience. (When Neville Chamberlain later signed a deal with Hitler at Munich, Trotsky was the only one to predict that this would lead directly to another pact—the one between Hitler and Stalin.) They are above all a moral warning against the crass mentality of moral equivalence. He wrote, "The wiseacres who claim that they see no difference between Bruning and Hitler are in fact saying: it makes no difference whether our organizations exist or whether they are already destroyed. Beneath this pseudo-radical verbiage hides the most sordid passivity."

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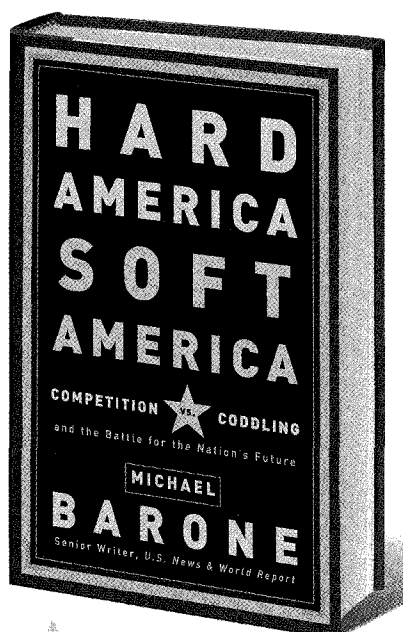
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Deutscher was so committed to the defense of Trotsky's honor, in this desperate situation and in the ones that preceded and followed it, that he could never quite accept the obvious: Trotsky was so much an intellectual that in the final analysis, Marxism was not quite enough for him. He always had the Russian classics in mind, and though these did seem to invoke the committed life as the highest calling, they also supplied ample warning of defeat and disappointment, if not despair. George Steiner cites a favorite passage of mine from Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*. It describes one of his escapes from Siberian exile, in which he succeeded in boarding a train under his real name, Lev Davidovitch Bronstein.

In my hands, I had a copy of the *Iliad* in the Russian hexameter of Gnyeditch; in my pocket, a passport made out in the name of Trotsky, which I wrote in it at random, without even imagining that it would become my name for the rest of my life ... Throughout the journey, the entire car full of passengers drank tea and ate cheap Siberian buns. I read the hexameters and dreamed of the life abroad. The escape proved to be quite without romantic glamour; it dissolved into nothing but an endless drinking of tea.

History, too, might have endings and ironies that are simply inscrutable, or that do not yield to any known dialectic. In spite of the most appalling discouragements and reverses and persecution, Trotsky did continue almost to the end in a belief that the workers would rise again, and that Hitlerism and Stalinism and imperialism would be overthrown by a self-aware and emancipated class. It was this that led him to his only truly banal or farcical initiative: the proclamation of a Fourth International to succeed the Social-Democratic and Communist ones. But at the very end of his life, cut off in Mexico and aware of his own declining health, he admitted, after the outbreak of the Second World War, that the conflict might just end without a socialist revolution. In that event the whole Marxist-Leninist project would have to be abandoned:

We would be compelled to acknowledge that [Stalinism] was rooted not in the backwardness of the country

and not in the imperialist environment, but in the congenital incapacity of the proletariat to become a ruling class. Then it would be necessary to establish in retrospect that ... the present USSR was the precursor of a new and universal system of exploitation.

Being Trotsky, he could not admit that in the event socialism "petered out as a Utopia," there would be nothing left worth fighting for. On the contrary, "it is self-evident that a new minimum program would be required—to defend the interests of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic system."

Isaac Deutscher disapproved so much of this closing statement—it came only months before Stalin's envoys of murder got past Trotsky's few dedicated bodyguards—that he almost failed to cite it, and shrouded it in his own verbiage about new "cycles" of postwar revolution, to be set in motion by Stalin's absorption of Eastern Europe. Professor George Lichtheim, who did unearth the article and who quoted it in an essay critical of Deutscher in 1964, went on to say that although Trotsky himself retained an element of grandeur, Trotskyism was completely finished as a political phenomenon, even a marginal one.

In point of fact, Trotskyism, or a variant of it, did have a brief blaze of revival in the Europe-wide *annus mirabilis* of 1968. The goateed face of "the Old Man" was on banners and posters as the Fifth Republic of Charles de Gaulle was shivered and shaken, and as worse dictators in Spain, Portugal, and Greece were assailed. That year there were also active Trotskyists in the seminal stages of the worldwide movement against the Vietnam War, and in the civil-rights campaign that put an end to the long domination of Orange Unionism in Northern Ireland. None of these activists had much in the way of a lasting effect. But the historical record ought to show that they exerted a certain force in Eastern Europe as well. The two best-known intellectual dissidents of the Polish movement of 1968, Jacek Kuron and Karel Modzelewski, both had "Trotskyist" pasts, and both went on to help form the KOR (Workers Defense Committee), which became the nucle-

us of Solidarnosc. In Czechoslovakia the Trotskyist Petr Uhl was the longest-serving political prisoner of the Red Army's occupation regime, and earned wide respect for his courage and principle. When the longest-serving Yugoslav detainee—a Kosovar—was released, he proposed naming a street in Pristina after Trotsky, because of the latter's principled defense of Albanian minority rights: this street would have been the only one in Europe so named. A couple of years ago I had a reminiscent lunch with Adam Michnik, one of the intellectual inspirations of the 1989 transition and a distinguished figure in the new Poland, and we compared and contrasted the activity of various Trotsky-ish sects in the events that leveled the Berlin Wall. It wasn't a completely quixotic or ironic conversation; the epigones of the Old Man had, partly inadvertently, carried out his final wish by taking part at last in a successful revolution—against communism.

Even today a faint, saintly penumbra still emanates from the Old Man. Where once the Stalinist press and propaganda machine employed the curse of Trotskyism to criminalize and defame the "rotten elements" and "rootless cosmopolitans," now the tribunes of the isolationist right level the same charge at neoconservatives and the supporters of regime change. In Patrick Buchanan's vituperations, and in a plethora of related attacks on a hidden American "cabal," it is openly said that the cunning members of a certain ethnic minority are up to their old tricks of "permanent revolution," and even that the arcane figure of Leo Strauss is the partial reincarnation of Trotsky. Intended as a mortal insult, and wildly, not to say laughably, mistaken in point of any theoretical resemblance, this charge might yet have a faint tincture of interest to it. As Alan Wald helped demonstrate in his brilliant if orthodox 1987 study *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left From the 1930s to the 1980s*, there is an occluded relationship between Trotsky and the founding editors of *Commentary*, *Dissent*, *The Public Interest*, and *Partisan Review*. Harold Isaac's *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*—once the best-known book in America on a seismic

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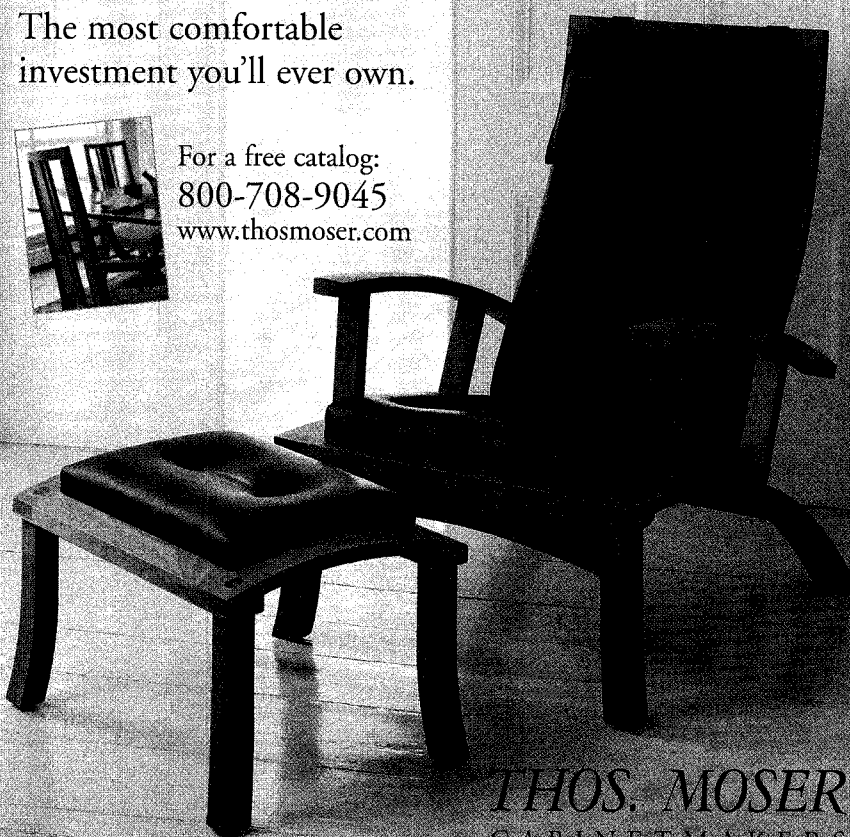
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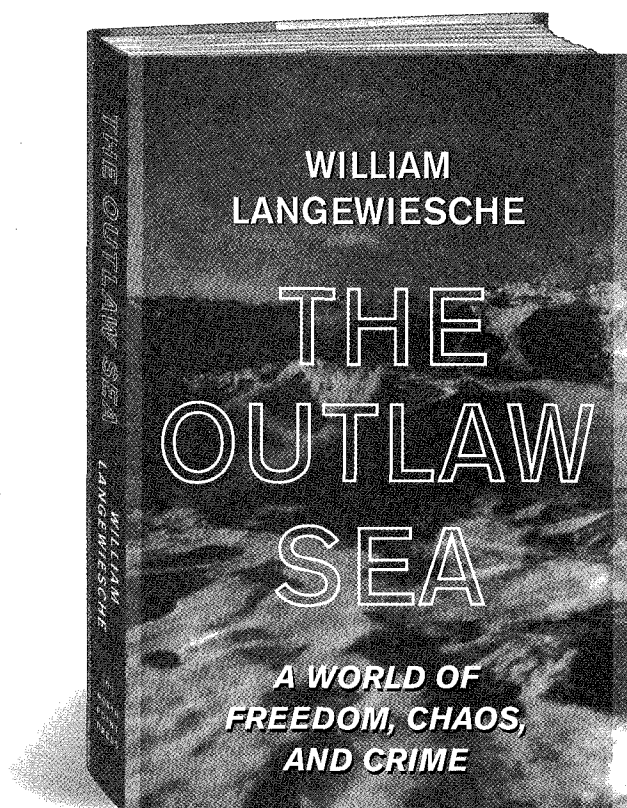


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event—was first published in 1938 with an introduction by Trotsky himself. (It was later, in less congenial times, republished without that contribution.) If any young scholar were now possessed of equivalent daring, a biography of the protean, scintillating revolutionary and Cold War sage Max Schachtman could be an intellectual Rosetta stone for the story of mental and moral combat in the modern American mind. Sometimes the kinship is merely an anecdotal or autobiographical one: Saul Bellow was once an admirer of Trotsky's and became close to Allan Bloom; the philosopher Martin Diamond did move from Trotskyism to Straussianism. In other instances the relationship is more paradoxical: in 1989 the Communist world was convulsed by a revolution from below, whereas "revolution from above" (Trotsky's inadequately satirical comment on Stalinism) might be a closer description of the design, at least, of the American intervention in Iraq.

Until we are done with the ironies of history (because they will never be done with us), the image of Trotsky will not dissipate. Of all his essays, the one that has stayed longest with me is "The Struggle for Cultured Speech," a little-known commentary on the vileness and obscenity of Russian cursing, full as this was of the accreted inheritance of serfdom and racism and self-hatred. Of all the descriptions we have of Trotsky, the most vivid is that furnished by Isaac Babel in his story "Line and Color," where at the close of a fatuous speech from Kerensky, Trotsky mounts the podium, twists his mouth, and confidently begins, "Comrades! ..." The tenderest—if the word may be excused—is from Mary McCarthy, at the end of her account in "My Confession" of the intellectual bullying that she received as a consequence of having taken Trotsky's part more or less by accident.

His shrug before the unforeseen implies an acceptance of consequences that is a far cry from penance and prophecy. Such, it concedes, is life. *Bravo*, old sport, I say, even though the hall is empty. ▀

*Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of The Atlantic and a columnist for Vanity Fair. He is writing a biography of Thomas Jefferson for the *Eminent Lives* series.*

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BOOKS

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Susan Sontag and Pauline Kael: a curious combination

BY DAVID THOMSON

.....

Susan Sontag and Pauline Kael were not really opposites—even if, as sisters, they might have driven parents to leave home. Sontag, with her sheer intellectual brilliance and youthful glamour, became a feminist heroine before the movement opted for “hero.” Kael, once she found her nest at *The New Yorker*, was central to young Americans’ coming to regard their movies (not “films,” please) as records of everything and anything they were feeling.

My Delta paperback of *Against Interpretation* (1966, and already then in its ninth printing!) has a knockout picture of Sontag on the back. It’s a photo, by Harry Hess, of a seductive brunette

who knows how not to notice the camera so that we have an open corridor straight into her dreamy eyes. She looks like Susan Kohner! That comparison isn’t going to mean much nowadays, but Kohner was a real movie stunner of the late 1950s—she played the “colored” daughter in Douglas Sirk’s *Imitation of Life* (1959).

Sontag (who was thirty-three in 1966) has changed a lot. You’d never pick her now as someone who might have had a chance in old-fashioned movies. She has come through so much: not just her own early life as the pre-eminent blue-stocking of the 1960s, but Vietnam, cancer, Sarajevo, and a belated bliss as—can it be?—a romance novelist (one fit

for Douglas Sirk?). One of the most penetrating and suspicious critics of the allure of photography, she still gives terrific head shot. As *The New York Times Magazine* said of her in the 1990s,

Wrinkles and creases run wild on her unadorned face. Her skin is as pale as a monk’s. Her long, unruly, onyx-black hair is rent by a dramatic slash of pure white that runs like an ice floe over the crest of her head.

You can call this gossip (and Craig Seligman elects not to mention it), but the same Sontag once wrote and directed a feature film, *Unguided Tour* (1983), that was no more than a love letter to the soulful splendor and unyielding inner life of the dancer and choreographer Lucinda Childs. More recently Sontag has been the lover of the *Vanity Fair* photographer Annie Leibovitz.

I mention this because of the acute observation by a fond Seligman that no one ever took a really good photograph of the woman who was swept off her feet by imagery and unrivaled at describing its sexy thrall: Pauline Kael. Kael was small and never threatened beauty, but she was passionately animated, and there was clearly a time in her life when she was as much a hound for men as her chatty prose was later attuned to the erotics of that skin substitute known as movie. But show her a camera and she took off her spectacles, screwed up her eyes, and grinned into the blur of light with a defiant lack of sophistication (or pretense) that bespoke a chicken farmer’s daughter from Petaluma, California.

So don’t bother Don King with this program: Sontag versus Kael is no contest. A single Sontag portrait is the kiss of death in any matchup of personality or charisma. The most remarkable point of all, however, is to absorb that crushing advantage before one is bound to agree with Craig Seligman that in every other respect Kael-Sontag is a walkover in which Kael is Benny Leonard and Sontag is Max Baer (Jewish boxers both), with Pauline the hip, cool ringmaster who can jab you with a left lead quicker than you can count, and Susan just a bear, shuffling along in pursuit of a lightweight’s speed and sizzle.

Which makes Don King the loser. It’s not that Sontag and Kael were ever a

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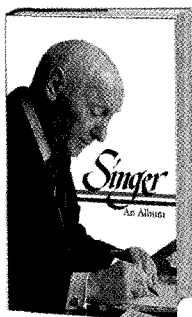
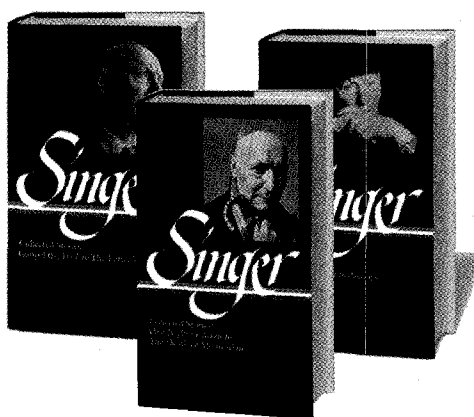
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scrapping couple (like Mailer and Vidal); it's not that the choice of which to read hangs that heavily on many young people today; it's not even that Seligman quite gets away with saying, Look, a whole book on my ruminations over these two interesting women. The work is divided into four chapters, or parts, and although it includes an unobtrusive pursuit of their politics and their sexuality, the first part—the overview—actually delivers everything to be had here. *Sontag & Kael* is a magazine essay stretched out to book length.

But that sleight of hand is forgivable. Seligman is smart, gracious, and so good a writer that you know he needs to get a first book out of the way so that he can turn to something more compelling or grounded. He has been a critic and editor for nearly twenty years now, and he is far too generous and self-effacing to push himself very much. But there are plenty of times in this odd mismatch when Seligman the referee is the most absorbing person in the ring, not least when he's encouraging himself to make the most of Sontag. He does come to his book as a longtime friend to Kael (someone happily in love with her imperious intimacy in life and her brilliant, conversational gotchas in print). He admits that he's ducked several opportunities to meet Sontag, and he announces himself with this charming confession:

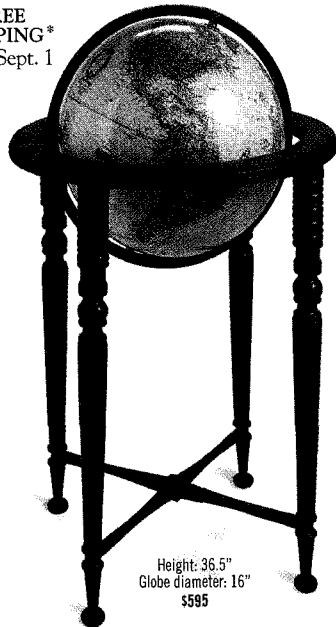
I didn't want to write a book with a hero and a villain, but Sontag kept making it hard for me. She is not a likable writer—but then she doesn't intend to be. She's elitist and condescending toward those less informed than she is (i.e., everybody) and gratingly unapologetic about it. Intimidation, which I'll grant is an indispensable critical weapon, she uses remorselessly. So does Kael. The difference is that Sontag uses it charmlessly—but then she doesn't intend to be charming. (Charm, she almost seems to feel, is for pipsqueaks.)

Seligman likes charm a lot, I'm glad to say, and he knows well enough that this cunning overture is politely blind to the fact that neither of his ladies asked to have this contest arranged. Long before the end of the book Seligman is admitting to us (he likes owning up after tricking us; hence charm) that putting them

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together is most useful as a way of drawing out what it meant in the second half of the twentieth century for an intellectual woman with an instinct for culture, high and low, to be serious—or, shall we say, on the pulse.

But first let's admit the inviting similarities between the two writers. They are female and Jewish. They both owed a lot to the West and then made it in New York. Both were moviegoers. Each came away from a failed marriage with a child to support. And they were contemporaries, more or less—though Sontag, the younger by fourteen years, had made an impact in advance of Kael. I'm sure Kael felt for much of her life that she had missed the boat. It's one of the things that help account for her vengeful attitude and the strident determination that you were for her or against her. Sontag, I imagine, has never expected, or cared much about, followers. As Seligman puts it, very nicely, she is a thinker inclined to add "but ..." after her own most searching statements. Kael, on the other hand, liked to pull off a breathless dunk and then turn, ecstatic, for the high fives of her young followers, the Paulettes (all crouching to match her height).

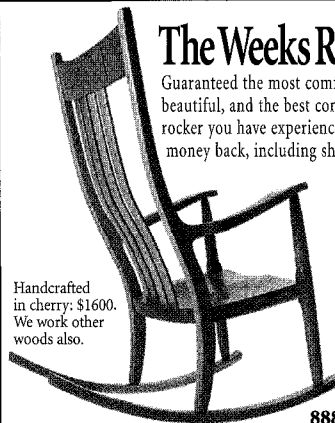
Sontag slipped into her destined career so much more easily than Kael. Born in New York, but raised in Tucson and Los Angeles, she went to the University of Chicago, where she got a degree and a husband (Philip Rieff, one of her instructors). She then ticked off Harvard, Oxford, and the Sorbonne, and was soon publishing the essays that would be gathered as *Against Interpretation*. There was a novel, *The Benefactor*, published in 1963, when Kael was still trying to find her niche as a magazine writer and was most at home (I'd say) as an iconoclastic voice in the British film magazine *Sight and Sound*.

Kael really was raised on a chicken farm in Marin; she was eighteen before the Golden Gate Bridge was opened. By then the family (Polish) had moved to San Francisco, though Seligman doesn't say where in that class-conscious city they lived. She went to Berkeley at the age of seventeen and studied philosophy, but it's clear that she was mixed up in avant-garde artistic circles in the Bay Area. She lived with the poet Robert Ho-

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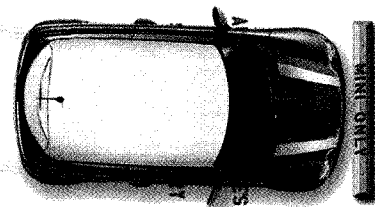
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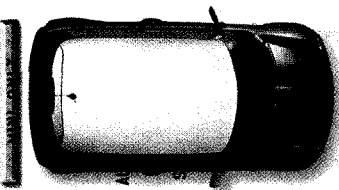
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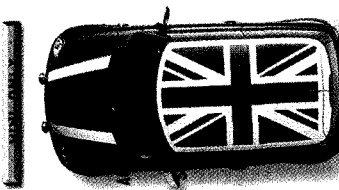


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ran, and she had a daughter by the experimental filmmaker James Broughton.

Like other Kaelites, Seligman (who has lived in San Francisco in his time) neglects these years—in part maybe because the older Kael put them out of bounds. It's not just that the young Kael led a wild life, or wrote plays (though she did, and where are they?). Rather, it's that by the age of forty, say, she was nowhere really, except that she had a child and a head buzzing with ideas and ambition. Was she content? Was she a hippie before that word was current? Was she easy-going? Did her anger begin in those years, or only later, when she realized how much she had neglected her start?

With the problem of limited material, it's odd that Seligman hasn't filled these years in more. Equally, one might not appreciate from this book that Sontag made her first movie, *Duet for Cannibals*, in 1969, and her second, *Brother Carl*, in 1971. I don't like those pictures; I don't feel they are the work of a natural filmmaker. But Sontag had made a start in literary fiction, too, and it's clear now that she had an old-fashioned storytelling energy waiting to be released. The lack of commentary on this is notable, just as it is hard to believe that anyone who admires Kael's prose as much as Seligman does would not die to read one of her plays. I'm sure they're "bad" (or other than good)—but how did Kael characters talk?

One of the most appealing things in this book is the way in which Seligman yields, slowly, to Sontag. Yes, he knows she can be ponderous and humorless, but he is frank and very intelligent on that Sontagian clarity with ideas in *Against Interpretation*, *On Photography* (1977), and *Illness as Metaphor* (1978). More than that, anyone has to honor the ways in which Sontag has steadily enlarged her given terrain. So the later novels, the romances, *The Volcano Lover* (1992) and *In America* (2000), are surprising, astonishing even, yet plainly from the same woman. Further, *In America*—more than Seligman says—is very much about acting and performance, in ways that are more intriguing than any performance in a Sontag film.

To make a last complaint about omission (and you may begin to see a pattern

here), Seligman leaves out entirely the occasion, in the late 1970s, when Kael went to Hollywood to work for Warren Beatty and Paramount, to ... well, what, exactly? To earn movie money, for one thing: her frustrating relationship with *The New Yorker* never made her financially secure. To be a pal to guys—like Beatty and the young director James Toback—who moved her. And surely to get that last chance (she was sixty) at doing the thing itself, putting on a show, making the screen's skin rock and roll. It didn't work; it became a humiliation—yet Kael had risked that, which was as brave as it was needy. Was there also a way in which the deceptions in Hollywood (of the self as well as of others), the sheer playacting, struck Kael as wasteful and even stupid? Much as she loved movies, I'm not sure that fantasy was her trip.

rightly so. His book ends with a touching flash of memoir as he recalls where he was (and how he was) as he read different Kael reviews. That experience is shared by many, and it captures why Kael is still being read decades after the immediate impact has gone from "her" movies: that immediacy wowed her. It was why she started writing the reviews as she watched the films, and it was the reason behind her dotty habit of seeing a film only once.

Sontag takes it for granted that the Bresson films she cherishes and the literature that has made her are there for all time. So, of course, one re-reads, and goes in for subsequent viewings. And as one grows older, so the works change; new doors open within them. But Kael lived by this diktat: Don't see a movie, even one you love, again—in other words,

Only briefly has anyone in America thought movies might be art. Pauline Kael embodied that moment, but she was suspicious that movies were most reliable as trash, as throwaways, as one-night stands.

In several ways the Hollywood excursion marked the beginning of her decline as a critic. Seligman says (without amplifying) that she lost her nerve. I'd love to hear why. But most of all, Kael lost the kind of films—from *Bonnie and Clyde* to *Taxi Driver*—on which she rode to glory.

Sontag has lived in her own head, but in the larger political panorama, too. Yes, she has written about a few current things, notably Hans-Jürgen Syberberg and his 1978 film *Our Hitler*, but her real subjects are matters of eternal intellectual debate. She said rock-and-roll changed her, but who could feel that? Kael, on the other hand, spurned by fate for so long, hit a lucky streak beyond equal in that she came to *The New Yorker* just as adult, tough, new films were being made in America. She was there for Coppola, Altman, Scorsese, and so on—but they were there for her too. It was also the moment when film education took off in America, when suddenly millions of kids were ready to read film criticism that had the smack of good sportswriting.

Seligman dotes on that Kael, and

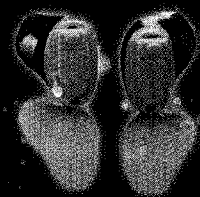
don't let it grow, don't let yourself grow old, don't let movies pass into the cultural bloodstream except as sudden and shocking injections. And in a way, that was both the cross Kael elected to bear and the most interesting problem her career raises. Are films for keeps, or are they chance epiphanies that shine light on the moments of our lives?

Kael was an intellectual—I'm sure the chickens in *Petaluma* knew her lectures. But put down in the intellectual cockpit of New York and movie criticism in the mid-1960s, she took off against the theories and dogmas of *Cahiers du cinéma* and Andrew Sarris, just as she predicted that film in academia would grind away that momentary, seizing wonder.

Well, Kael died sad—for many reasons. Illness took away vitality and the confident command of her own language. And just as she had dreaded, a changed film business stopped making the movies she loved: if you doubt that, wonder what the rhapsodist of *Last Tango in Paris* (1972) would have thought of Bertolucci's gelid, pretty, and utterly danger-free *The Dreamers* (2003). The

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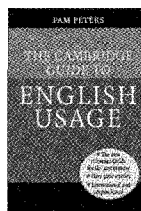
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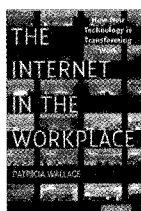
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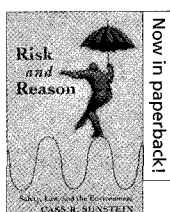
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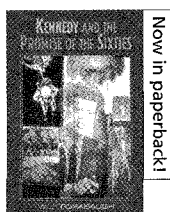


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history of the movies is short, and we forget how rapidly the medium has changed in what it expects of us. Only briefly has anyone in America thought movies might be art or serious or keepers. Kael embodied that moment, but she was suspicious of it. That was her "but..."—that movies were most reliable as trash, as throwaways, as one-night stands. Kael had sex with those movies; there's no better way to put it.

Will that thrill last? I hope so, but I'm not sure. I believe Kael emerges as both a writer on her times and a veiled autobiographer. But her own stress on the moment predicts the fate of much reviewing—so it was odd and damaging that Kael was such a godmother of younger opinions, leaning on them for agreement. This is where the tiny woman had weight. Her films were for this evening, yet she hungered for lasting fame. It's a struggle that found voice in her "attack" on *Citizen Kane* (1941) and the overbearing manner of Orson Welles. For she half guessed that the only way to save that masterpiece from the tedium of always being voted supreme was to start knocking it. (By now, of course, it needs to be banned.) Seligman sort of knows that Sontag is, if not the better

writer, then the dealer in ideas for the ages. Staid, maybe, she was the more adventurous. In contrast, Kael was like Hildy Johnson (Rosalind Russell), the reporter in Howard Hawks's *His Girl Friday* (1940)—itching for a story, a deadline, and a Cary Grant to flirt with. Susan Sontag is ready to be the same film's Ralph Bellamy figure, a little laughed at but endearing and honest and serious to the point of solemnity.

So we have made room for them both—but leave space for Craig Seligman. He will do better than this entertaining book, once he knows we like anyone who writes as well as he does. I think he guesses that at some point the writer in Kael fell upon the movies. It could have been jazz or boxing (imagine Kael on Don King; wonder if Sontag has ever heard of him). The great continents of charm (or its enemies) are wide open to an observer as good-natured as Seligman. His admiration for Kael has raised him to be a valuable social commentator, and not just a Paulette. ▀

David Thomson's *The New Biographical Dictionary of Film* (2002) will appear in paperback in November. His new book, *The Whole Equation: A History of Hollywood*, will be published in January. He lives in San Francisco.

NEW FICTION

LAFF TRACKS

BY JON ZOBNENICA

.....

At the end of Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* (1988), the fearsome, fetching, dangerously divine Fleur Pillager—a Chippewa earth mother so idolized by the author as to seem a form of creative self-caricature—finally walks away from her beloved patch of Dakota forest, abandoning it to the whim and destruction of white loggers and tribal sellouts. Erdrich's latest finds the indomitable Fleur trudging all the way to Minneapolis, where she hires on as a laundress in the home of a wealthy timber baron simply in order to take his life in revenge. Fortunately or not,

however, Erdrich doesn't like her dishes served cold, and soon a bedroom farce breaks out amid the tragedy. Thus *Four Souls* juxtaposes the silly and the somber, the ribald and the elegiac. Nuance heeds the DO NOT DISTURB sign and generally stays away.

In one of the most chilling scenes in *Tracks*, Fleur joins a card game with ghosts and is forced to wager on her young daughter's soul. The gambling theme returns here, as do several other main characters, but *Four Souls* feels like little more than a low-stakes game among studiously eccentric old friends—those whose seriousness becomes a mockery of itself and whose humor is entirely too insistent. Erdrich needs to work on her poker face. ▀



FOUR SOULS

by Louise Erdrich
HarperCollins

THE TERRORS

One of the foremost scholars of Soviet history assesses an ambitious new biography of Stalin

BY ROBERT CONQUEST

.....

Simon Sebag Montefiore's biography of Stalin is a large and ambitious overview—and underview—of the Soviet leader's life and epoch, drawn from an impressively wide array of Russian sources. In particular the author has mined the rich memories and recorded the opinions of a number of the descendants of key historical figures—men such as Mikoyan and Khrushchev. Antonia Fraser, herself a fine biographer, called Sebag Montefiore's previous book, on the eighteenth-century Russian prince Grigory Potemkin, "a good racy historical read." Those words aptly describe his newest book as well, even though it makes no pretense of being a historical work, properly speaking. Sebag Montefiore focuses on the human element (especially the family lives of the dictator, his associates, and his victims), generally treating the vast events of the era as scenery. Still, if somewhat incidentally, his research has yielded material that greatly improves our historical understanding.

For example, newly uncovered high-level political documents from 1931 to 1934 finally destroy the argument, canvassed even quite recently, that there were no disputes in the post-1930 Politburo—that Stalin ruled unopposed. This is crucial to both historical and biographical insight: it confirms that Stalin's fight to retain power was not only a struggle against the people but also, and concomitantly, a struggle against any signs of independence, or even wavering, within his own apparatus.

Sebag Montefiore's treatment of the greatest horrors of Stalin's rule—the terror-famine of 1933, the "Great Terror" of 1937–1938, and the postwar terrors, with their climax in the anti-Semitic

"Doctors' Plot"—likewise makes able use of newly available sources. At the time and for decades afterward the Soviet position on the famine was simply to deny it; merely to speak the word, even in the affected areas, was a crime. Soviet embassies and foreign sympathiz-

ers similarly averted their eyes from this and the other terrors. Historians were therefore in a strange position: before the collapse of the Soviet Union we had to

learn what we could of its past from an accumulation of unofficial testimonials, against a background of official silence, distortion, or denial. A great deal of probable evidence was available, but

ses III at Medinet Habu, or in the mortuary complex of Pepi II in South Saqqara, which give detailed but factually untrue accounts of the victories of these Egyptian rulers), had suddenly been handed a store of material by a conscientious time-traveler. During the past decade it became possible to assemble the various data and accounts of the Soviet era into a complete and verifiable whole. Our original, often tentatively accepted details, and the general reliability of our sources and estimates, could at last be checked.

Indeed, most of the indirect evidence from the Stalinist period has been confirmed by the recently released material, as have some old first-person accounts. One of the most significant of the latter is the 1953 book *The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes*, by Alexander Orlov, a high-ranking NKVD officer who defected to the West in 1938, during the Great Purge. Most of his direct observations seemed reliable, and the rest plausible, but they remained of necessity unproved. Now we can regard them as solidly in the

STALIN: THE COURT OF THE RED TIGER

by Simon Sebag Montefiore

Knopf

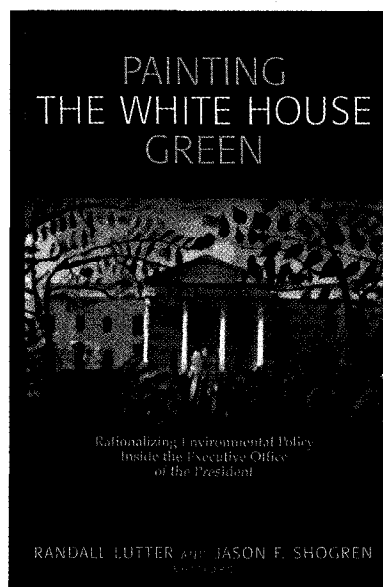


much of it was rejected in the West as unreliable or indirect.

Matters changed dramatically in the late 1980s, with the gradual release of a mass of previously suppressed material. It was as though historians of an ancient empire, having been forced to rely on a handful of personal papyri and a few royal inscriptions (think of the splendid reliefs on the walls of the Temple of Ram-

record. Drawing partly on Orlov, Sebag Montefiore presents a full and highly readable account of Stalin's activities during the 1936 trial of his old rival Grigory Zinoviev. The trial was the first of three great falsified set pieces presented to the Soviet public during the purge.

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these anecdotal accounts, he presents the terrors clearly and unambiguously. Equally vivid is his handling of the first portion of Orlov's book that was confirmed by documents—the story that Abram Slutsky, the head of the International Department of the NKVD, who officially had “died at his battle post” after suffering a heart attack, had in fact been poisoned in the office of the ruthless deputy head of the service, Mikhail Frinovsky. We now have, as was not available to Sebag Montefiore, or to Orlov, the added detail that Slutsky was seized by Frinovsky's colleague, the equally notorious Leonid Zakovsky, whereupon the NKVD's poison expert ran in and administered the injection.

Sebag Montefiore is at his best when writing about the dramatic days just before and after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union—a story whose details come almost entirely from the new records and from the memories of crucial people in Moscow. The Nazi attack, in June of 1941, surprised and shook Stalin. After recovering from the shock, he again manifested his dictatorial strength. Some half a million Soviet soldiers had left the front. They were rounded up, and more than 10,000 were shot; the rest were formed into new units. This ruthlessness, which had the desired disciplinary effect, was accompanied by the execution of a group of experienced officers—and of the wives of previously executed officers.

The fate of the officers' wives was part of a widespread pattern—one to which Sebag Montefiore, with his interest in family matters, rightly calls our attention. According to a Soviet law written in 1935, the relatives of an accused person were also responsible for the “crime,” even if they were ignorant of it. It soon became routine for wives, children, brothers, and sisters of terror victims to suffer equally dire consequences. Consider the stories, recently learned, of the wives of Marshal Vasily Blyukher, who died under torture in 1938: his first and second wives were shot, and the third was sentenced to eight years in a labor camp.

In this regard it is instructive to compare the Stalinist epoch with that of the czars. For example, in the earlier period the execution of Lenin's brother on genuine grounds of treason (he participated

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in a terrorist plot) did not affect Lenin's academic career, much less result in his own execution. The decline in the government's humanity is remarkable. So is the difference between life in Stalin's gulag, whose inhabitants were starved and sweated, and the relatively comfortable "exile" to Siberian villages imposed on offenders by the czarist regime.

The impact of the terrors on Party members and other elites has long been known. Our most substantial gain in understanding the Stalinist era concerns how and to what extent they struck at the general population. This is now decisively documented, in papers signed by Stalin and specifying quotas for death and imprisonment by category and locale; these decrees resulted in nearly 770,000 executions in 1937-1938. In addition, over the whole of his career Stalin signed 44,000 individual death

meetings at secondary schools in which young Komsomols would harangue their classmates about parents who had turned out to be "enemies of the people"—after which the children of those arrested would have to come forward and join in the denunciations.

One aspect of the Soviet experience whose aftereffects are still manifest was the progressive lowering of mental standards. The attack on the intelligentsia is well known: from writers to scientists, they perished in droves. At the same time, society experienced, at every level, a loud and insistent influx of the narrow, the hysterical, and the untrue. Stupidity reigned at the highest levels—evidenced, for example, by the propagation of pseudo-science, the chief instance of which was the biologist Trofim Lysenko's uninformed doctrines of agricultural genetics. And members of the apparat

We still lack a full understanding of the mental degradation inflicted by Stalin's regime. A Russian academic told me recently that many Westerners he meets don't realize how horrible a life it was.

sentences. The "anti-Soviet elements" targeted included former kulaks, former officials of the czarist state and army, former members of non-Bolshevik parties, religious activists, and "speculators"—a wide swath of society. Those carrying out the orders were required to send "albums" of the victims to Moscow, to confirm that the quotas had been met.

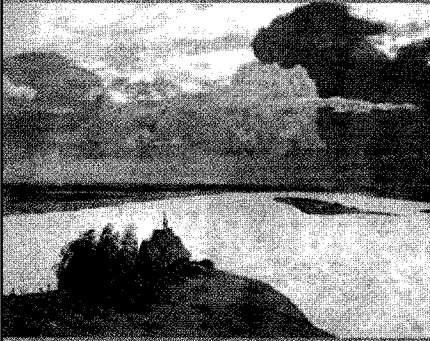
There is no longer much serious dispute about what the terrors unleashed, or about the extravagant falsification practiced by the regime. If anything is still missing in Western understanding, it is a full recognition of the mental degradation inflicted by the regime. The entire population was forced to accept a supposedly all-explaining dogma, along with the notion that it was living in a social and political utopia—when what it actually experienced, of course, was the opposite. A Russian academic told me recently that many Westerners he meets still don't realize how horrible and psychologically exhausting a life it was. Much of the new evidence speaks directly to this point. For example, we now have official reports of

class proper, including the political elite, were mentally so constricted and desensitized that they were largely unable to operate intelligently. The intellectual mediocrity of Leonid Brezhnev and the clumsy activism of Nikita Khrushchev were direct legacies of Stalin's rule.

The most remarkable thing about the Soviet phenomenon, however, was not its complete control over the minds of Soviet citizens but its extraordinarily successful effort to instill its falsifications in the minds of many abroad, who were under no compulsion to accept them. Although this is not Sebag Montefiore's concern per se, a full view of Stalinism can hardly fail to note the worldwide propagation of its ideology and myths.

The Western misreading of the Soviet system was largely the product of a simple reflex. The Soviet order—indeed, the practice of communism everywhere—was seen as a form of "progressive" hostility to established Western politics and, particularly, economics. It seemed to represent a new system that had rid

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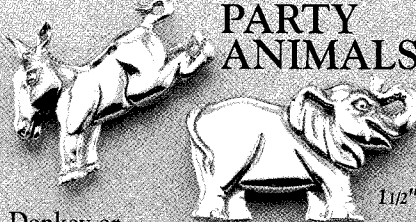


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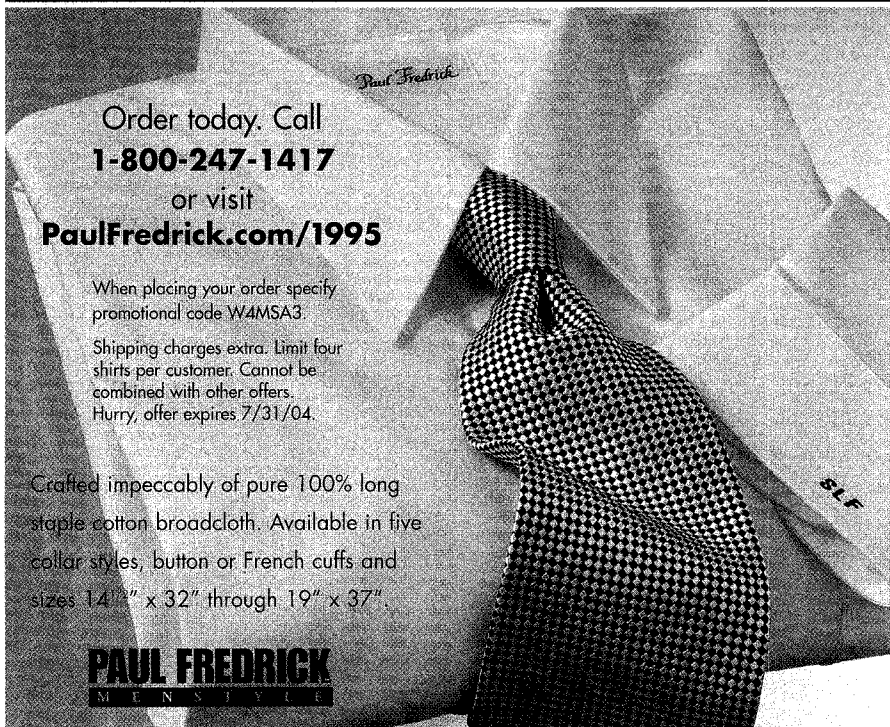
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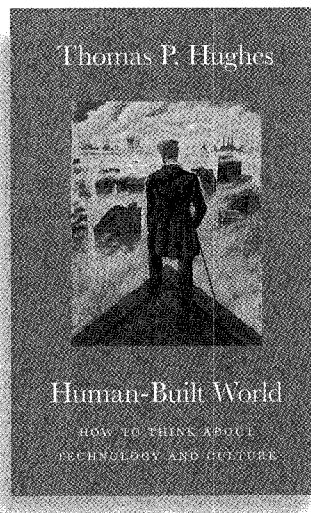
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itself of the market, of exploitation. Whatever its doubtless temporary—or invented—faults (so the thinking went), the Soviet ideology stood for a better world. Thus many Western writers, including Lion Feuchtwanger, Henri Barbusse, and even Romain Rolland, the sensitive follower of Gandhi, spoke out in defense of the purges. In the United States a number of authors, poets, professors, and artists, including Theodore Dreiser and Corliss Lamont, signed a manifesto attacking the Dewey Commission—a body formed in 1937 to examine the charges against Leon Trotsky, and whose findings were an unsparing, irrefutable indictment of the realities of the Soviet system. From 1939 to 1941, Soviet sympathizers went so far as to oppose the effort to stop Hitler. After Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, Stalinist devotees in the West simply switched their stance on Nazi Germany. Even today some of their survivors imply that their anti-fascism was never interrupted.

The Holocaust stood clearly as a monstrosity from the start. The communist record was more blurred, more polymorphous; and for a long while it retained remnants of its initial luster (something that National Socialism never enjoyed outside Germany). As a result, many Western intellectuals, though no longer approving, remained nonjudgmental for many years.

There will probably always be an alienated intelligentsia, especially in tolerant, democratic societies. But the extent to which this stratum was penetrated, misled about reality, and to some degree fanaticized by Moscow's manipulations is striking. William James wrote that philosophical opinion is largely a matter of temperament. This applies to political and other types of opinion as well. The sort of temperament we have seen during the twentieth century, combining at its worst a blend of zealotry and unteachability, can be found in earlier eras. It will doubtless always be lying in wait for us. Knowledge of its recent embodiments, although useful, will not eradicate it. The evil will, alas, simply take new forms. ▮

Robert Conquest is a fellow of the Hoover Institution and the author of Harvest of Sorrow (1986) and The Great Terror (1990). His most recent book, The Dragons of Expectation, will be published later this year.

PURSUIITS & RETREATS

INNOCENT BYSTANDER

WONDERS NEVER CEASE

Updating Philon of Byzantium's famous list

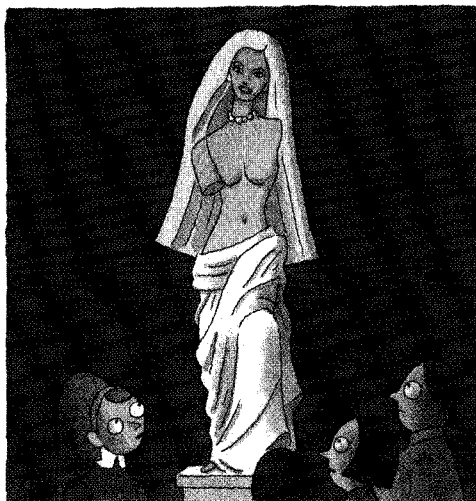
BY CULLEN MURPHY

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It is often a plus, in advancing some novel proposition, to be able to say that the whole world backs you up. In 2002, when the manufacturers of M&Ms wanted to add a new color to their candies, they gave the choice to consumers, who cast some 10 million votes and chose purple (over aqua and pink). A few years ago, in advance of the millennium, Barnes & Noble compiled a list of the most significant books published in each year of the twentieth century, and asked customers to vote on which work should represent each year. (Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* was the choice for 1980, Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* for 1912.) Meanwhile, the editors of *Time* magazine decided that the New Year 2000 issue should bear a portrait of the Person of the Century, and in addition to selecting a winner (Albert Einstein, with runners-up Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Mohandas Gandhi) by means of internal discussion, they decided to poll the planet, encouraging people everywhere to submit nominations. *Time's* Web site eventually logged about 4.5 million submissions, and although Einstein, Roosevelt, and Gandhi received substantial global support, the person who emerged at the top of the list (after Jesus was disqualified by the editors) was Elvis Presley.

Now a Swiss filmmaker named Bernard Weber has launched an effort to survey humanity for its views on designating the New Seven Wonders of the World, an updated version of the list compiled by Philon of Byzantium in 200 B.C. The original Seven Wonders included four structures that many peo-

ple today can name or recognize (the Pyramids of Egypt, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Colossus of Rhodes, the Lighthouse of Alexandria) and three that never seem to stick in anyone's memory (the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, and the Statue of Zeus at Olympia). Weber, motivated by equal measures of idealism and a sense that the Ancient Wonders no longer fire the imagination, began soliciting Internet votes for a New Seven



Wonders in June of 2000, and he will keep the site open until November of 2005. Already ballots have been cast by more than 16 million people from all over the world, and Weber expects to have at least 60 million votes by the time the polls close.

But for all that, the final roster of New Wonders is likely to be as unsurprising as *Time's* roster of finalists for Person of the Century. In the balloting thus far the Great Wall of China has garnered

11.29 percent of the vote, followed by the Potala Palace at Lhasa, the Roman Colosseum, Chichén Itzá, the statues of Easter Island, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and the Taj Mahal. Move down the list a little and you find the Eiffel Tower, the Alhambra, Angkor Wat, and the Sydney Opera House. All these things are worthy of recognition, to be sure; they are even downright wondrous. But many of them are not exactly new, and there is also something dutiful and leaden about the collection, as if it had been drawn up by UNESCO.

Of course, it's easy to play the naysayer—to criticize, to carp and cavil, to tear down. The responsible path is to offer some constructive alternatives.

What might a more compelling New Seven Wonders of the World consist of? I have not yet solicited global comment, though people everywhere have an open invitation to weigh in. But to start the discussion, let me offer a few possibilities.

I. *The Molasses of Roads.* The U.S. interstate highway system is one of the glories of our age, and no stretch is more emblematic than the Santa Monica Freeway near the I-5 interchange, site of perhaps the worst traffic jams in North America. Larry McMurtry once described a driver's first impression: "After years on the tributaries, he had finally reached the Father of Waters." Traffic-control experts estimate the amount of time lost annually to congestion on the Santa Monica Freeway at upwards of 18.6 million hours.

II. *The Hanging Polyps of Virtual Colonoscopy.* It is a truism that mortality from cancer of the colon can be greatly reduced by regular checkups for people over the age of fifty, and it is a truism as well that the procedure involved



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is a profoundly unpleasant one. But wait! Scientists have now developed a process involving a CT scanner and virtual-reality software that can look inside without going inside. Another breakthrough involves a pill-sized camera that, after ingestion, can snap two pictures every second during its eight-hour path of exploration, sending images back to emission control.

III. *The Mausoleum of Zbarsky.* Let it not be said that the arts of corporeal conservation died with the ancient Egyptians. Boris Zbarsky was one of the embalmers originally entrusted with the task of preserving the reliquiae of V. I. Lenin, a job that later fell to his son and other Soviet technicians. Many details of Lenin's maintenance are still closely held by this scientific priesthood, but it is known that every eighteen months the body is removed from the mausoleum and submerged for thirty days in glycerol and potassium acetate. There is wide agreement that Lenin looks better today than when he died, in 1924. "Some viewers say Lenin appears to be sleeping," one newspaper observed last year after examining the results of an extensive makeover. "Others say he looks like waxed fruit."

IV. *The Garbage Garden of Gotham.* The Fresh Kills landfill, on Staten Island, now landscaped as parkland, is one of the largest man-made objects in North America—in volume some twenty-five times the size of the Great Pyramid of Khufu. It holds half a century's worth of New York City's municipal solid waste, covering 3,000 acres. More artifacts lie discarded here than some entire nations have produced since the dawn of time. The Fresh Kills mound rises to 225 feet above sea level; estimates at one point were that it would ultimately reach 500 feet, which would make it the tallest point on the Atlantic shore between Florida and Maine.

V. *The Temple of Aesculapius at Houston.* Ailing potentates from around the world congregate at the Terrace Suites of St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, in Texas, for five-star boutique medical service. As the hospital itself states, "The Terrace Suites offer those special touches—spacious rooms ... award-winning cuisine you can enjoy in your own ele-

gant dining area ... complimentary high tea, complete with a savory selection of fruit, sandwiches, and fine pastries." The furniture is mahogany. The bathroom counters are made of brushed granite.

VI. *The Biblioteca Brautigania.* In one of his books the novelist and poet Richard Brautigan conjured a library that would accept and preserve only unpublished manuscripts. Not long after Brautigan's suicide, in 1984, such a repository was created at the Fletcher Free Library, in Burlington, Vermont. Here at the so-called Brautigan Library come to rest hundreds of works that, to use a delicate phrase from the publishing world, "failed to find an audience"—works such as Leo Witz's memoir *Strive for Mediocrity* and Albert E. Helzner's *The Long-Range Effects of Birth*. Who can deny that the corpus of work that actually gets published deeply misrepresents the true range of literary endeavor? The Brautigan Library serves as a corrective.

VII. *The Venus of El Segundo.* Since 1959, when the first Plasticine effigy was produced, the Mattel corporation, of El Segundo, California, has manufactured more than a billion copies of the Barbie doll. It is said that American girls on average own eight of these figures. No other evocation of the female form has been as widely distributed. The effigies are laden with raw emotional power: the recent breakup of Barbie and her possibly gay longtime consort, Ken, caused worldwide consternation (though the couple are said to "remain friends"). Will the figurine acquire a philosophical dimension? A Mattel executive spoke recently of the need to address fundamental questions of backstory: "Who is Barbie? Why does she exist?" Along with Cheerleader Barbie and Cali Barbie there may soon be Simone Weil Barbie.

The suggestions outlined here, as noted, are meant simply as a starting point. It is important to approach this task with humility. Of the original Seven Wonders of the World only one, the Pyramids, can still be seen. It may be that centuries from now only one of my Seven Wonders will survive. I hope it is virtual colonoscopy. I fear it will be the Brautigan Library. ■

Cullen Murphy is The Atlantic's managing editor.



PERSONAL FILE

ORGANIZE YOUR LIFE!

The modern condition is to be overwhelmed by everything. Now comes David Allen, who can teach even you how to stop stewing and start doing

BY JAMES FALLOWS

.....

I try to stay out of cults, but there's one I'm itching to join. To be honest, I'm just about in. It is based on the writings and thoughts of David Allen, a business consultant in Ojai, California, which is near Santa Barbara. Over the past twenty years Allen has attracted a strong corporate following with books, articles, and seminars that present his system for "mastering workflow." After hearing about him four years ago and then reading his books, attending a two-day seminar in Dallas, and trying to keep up with the multitude of Web sites where people parse his advice as if it were the Constitution, I find Allen to be both a useful and a fascinating figure. His usefulness arises from the very practical how-to tips he dispenses, of which examples follow. His fascination involves what his system, and the enthusiastic reception it has met, say about the aspects of modern working life that drive many people nuts.

The most coherent introduction to the David Allen Way is his book *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Pro-*

ductivity (2001), which has sold 200,000 copies. The message is also contained in an eight-CD recording of one of Allen's seminars, which sells for \$90—and at the seminars themselves, which cost \$695 to attend. Allen says he wrote the book to encapsulate the system he had developed in working with aerospace, financial, pharmaceutical, and other companies. The main promise Allen offers clients is not necessarily that he will help them do more work but that he can show them how to feel less racked and anxious about the things they can and cannot do.

As I open the copy of *GTD* on my desk (devotees use that abbreviation both for the book and for the larger philosophy), I am reminded of how cultish the David Allen world view could appear to, um, nonbelievers. In his introduction Allen quotes one client as saying, "When I habitually applied the tenets of this program it *saved* my life ... when I faithfully applied them, it *changed* my life." The back cover of *GTD* has a blurb from Patricia Seybold,

a noted computer consultant, that begins, "David Allen's prescriptions saved my life!" Hundreds of testimonials in the same vein appear on the Web sites. (The main ones are Allen's own site, www.davidco.com, which includes a "Posting Board," and several active Allen-related discussion groups on Yahoo.) "It is not overstating things to say that you have changed my life, both personally and professionally," Joseph Jones, the head of a consulting firm called Critical Domain, wrote to Allen. "Thank you, thank you, thank you." When I spoke to fellow seminar-goers and called some veterans of the Allen system, I got similar responses.

The doctrine that inspires this devotion starts with the idea that the difference between done and undone tasks is more stress-inducing than most people recognize. In earlier times, Allen says, work was more physically exhausting than it is today. But it produced less anxiety, because people could easily tell what they had to do and whether it had been completed. Either the wood was chopped or it was not. The typical modern day, he says, is a fog of constantly accumulating open-ended obligations, with little barrier between the personal and the professional and few clear signals that you are actually "done." E-mail pours in. Hallway conversations end with "I'll get

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back to you.” The cell phone rings. The newspaper tells you about movies you’d like to see, recipes you’d like to try, places you’d like to go. There are countless things that everyone really “should” do more of—exercise, read, spend time with the family, have lunch with a contact, be “better” at work. The modern condition is to be overwhelmed—and, according to Allen, to feel not just tired but chronically anxious, because so many things you have at some level committed to do never get done.

The anxiety is compounded, he says, by a foible of the human mind: it can’t remember, and it can’t forget. No one can possibly remember all the promises, deadlines, and other “shoulds” of personal and occupational life. The proof is the need for datebooks. No sane person tries to keep all future meetings in his or her head. But, perversely, the brain also can’t forget; at some deep and not very efficient level it is always stewing about the things you should have done but haven’t, and it tends to remind you of them at the worst time—typically, 3:00 A.M. A vague but powerful awareness of all these uncompleted promises, or “open loops,” is what Allen sees as the basic source of work-related stress. Again, datebooks illustrate the point. People complain about their schedules, but they rarely wake up at night worrying that they won’t remember to go to the airport on the right day. That is because they trust their datebooks and trust themselves to look at their datebooks regularly.

Allen claims that anxiety about undone-but-nagging tasks is so profound that it creates “an all-pervasive stress factor whose source can’t be pinpointed.” Most professional people are so accustomed to this pressure, he says, that they can barely imagine its absence—an ideal state he calls “nothing on your mind.” In this condition a person is, he claims, like an athlete in the zone, wasting no time or energy fretting about what he didn’t do yesterday or should do tomorrow but simply meeting each challenge as it occurs. “The more something is on your mind,” he says, “the less it is usually getting done.” Each heap of papers on a desk or clutter of e-mails in an in-box takes a person further away from the de-

sired state, because every single element represents something left unfinished.

The first time I met Allen, at the seminar in Dallas, I raised my hand when he was explaining this principle. I think I was trying to prove that I was a tough, skeptical journalist, not some gullible Moonie. Was it really true that disorder in part of one's life inevitably spreads to the rest of it? What about people who function in tunnel-vision mode, blocking out every distraction around them, like a doctor in a battlefield hospital? Or like a magazine writer who bravely concentrates on the keyboard and the screen despite an office full of junk?

Well, Allen replied, consider this: "People usually feel great about their jobs just before they go on vacation. It's not really about the vacation, it's about all the loose ends they're forced to tie up before they go." And could I truly claim that people had none of their "energy" (a favorite Allen term) drained by the disorderly parts of their working environment? "Think of how good you feel," he said, "and all the energy that gets uncorked, when you finally finish something that has been nagging you for a long time, like cleaning the garage." He's probably right—I watched my wife clean the garage one time, and she seemed to feel better afterward.

To test Allen's theory, and with the help of Anne Gennett, one of his "coaches," I eventually spent two days digging toward the surface of my desk through letters, receipts, clippings, and similar detritus. And yes, as each stack moved into the trash or some other "done" status, a little drop of dread fell off my brow.

So what is Allen's plan? I was not kidding when I said that the details and implications of his message are discussed by hundreds of people on Web sites, so any unauthorized summary like mine will be challenged. But I see four crucial principles in his system.

The first is what he calls "getting everything out of your head." That is, finding some equivalent to a datebook that you can trust to contain a complete list of the things you want to, have to, or are expected to do. Only when your mind really believes that *all* your duties

are written down and retrievable can it stop waking you up at night. At his seminars Allen has attendees spend half an hour or more on a "RAM dump"—writing down everything they are worried about or planning for, from an upcoming vacation to a business report. At the end of the exercise he asks whether simply beginning the list made people feel slightly more in control of their lives; usually they say yes.

As an ongoing practice, Allen says, people need to create and use a "leak-proof collection system," into which new thoughts, chores, and plans will reliably flow. GTD contains extensive discussions of the practical aspects of such systems: for instance, why it's useful to have one special file folder—made of rugged plastic, and red, so that it's easy to find—always with you when you travel. All receipts, meeting notes, and similar travel junk can get shoved into that one place, to be processed when you get back. (I have found this a big improvement over my previous "What is this little scrap of paper in my coat pocket?" receipt-management strategy.)

In keeping with this principle, Allen encourages people to write down "to-do" items—a video to rent, a call to make—as soon as they crop up or pop into their heads. He carries a Palm Pilot for that purpose, and in the mid-1990s he helped found a software company, Actioneer, whose products included software to make note-taking easier on a Palm. (I first heard of Allen when I bought Actioneer software.) I've internalized Allen's gospel to the extent that I try always to have a note pad—paper or electronic—with me; and I'm nervous when someone tells me he's going to do something but I don't see him write it down.

The second crucial principle is what Allen calls "next action" thinking—his version of the homily "A journey of a thousand miles ..." The more important the goal (fix your marriage, get a better job), the easier it is to procrastinate, because people don't know just where to start. Allen emphasizes that almost any undertaking involves a specific and manageable *next* thing to do. He has seminar attendees go through their "RAM dump" list and figure out for

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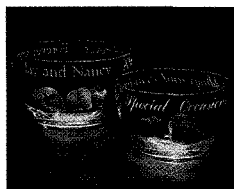


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each major goal the next specific step they could take. Usually this is as straightforward as making a phone call or setting up an appointment. The habit of next-action thinking reduces each new challenge or commitment to a series of specific steps. As a corollary he says that meetings should never end without an agreement on what next step each participant is expected to take.

Once long-term goals have been thus atomized, Allen's third principle comes into play. This involves a series of reminders and tricks to increase the chances that all the little to-dos actually get done. What do people do when they want to be *sure* to take something on a trip? he asks. They put it in front of the door, so they can't miss it on the way out. He suggests similar tricks to reassure yourself that you will remember obligations when you can do something about them. An example is the "tickler" system—a set of forty-three file folders that sit on your desk. They are labeled "1" through "31" for the days of the month, and "Jan." through "Dec." for the months of the year. If there's something you don't want to deal with now but must handle by the 15th, you put it in the "15" folder—and trust yourself to open that folder by or on that day. (This sounds nuts; it actually helps.) Similarly, he suggests organizing to-do items on the basis not of urgency or priority but of where you perform them—things you can do by telephone, things you can do online. Here's a stupid-sounding illustration I have found surprisingly useful: Allen suggests keeping running lists, either on paper or in an electronic organizer, of things you need from the drugstore, the hardware store, et cetera, so you can check the lists when you happen to be in those places. This has helped me avoid the typical cycle of, for example, 1) noticing that I need a new light bulb when I try to turn on the desk lamp, 2) not thinking about the light bulb when I pass an appropriate store, and 3) finding the desk still dark.

Grouping tasks by context (where and when you might actually do them) rather than by ultimate importance is a basic difference between Allen's system and that of the productivity expert

Stephen R. Covey, the author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (1990) and the originator of the popular Franklin Covey line of paper and electronic organizers. Covey's system is based on a careful matching of your long-term goals with your hour-by-hour activities, so that you spend as much of your time as possible doing the most "important" tasks. Allen claims that his system is more flexible and less likely to be overwhelmed by the assault of e-mail, phone calls, and last-minute new obligations that make up the working day.

The final principle of Allen's system is developing the habit of review. Once goals are written down and broken into manageable steps, with reminders placed where you will actually heed them, you should keep scanning your lists of commitments rather than ignore them. In principle this is no more demanding than looking at your datebook each morning to see where you're supposed to go. In practice, Allen says, the "weekly review"—an hour or so spent going over the list of all long-term projects and short-term next actions—is the heart of his system. If you develop the habit of writing everything down, he says, you can remove anxiety about things' falling through the cracks. And if you apply the habit of looking over everything once a week, you can feel comfortable about never being more than a week behind in tending to important matters. "We all tolerate a certain level of scrounginess, but not more," he says in the seminar. "Most people feel too scroungy if they don't brush their teeth every day. So they *have* to do it. Some people feel too scroungy if they don't do it after every meal." His goal is to build in a similar sense of guilt and compulsion about reviewing your lists. "You have to think about your 'stuff' more than you think," Allen says time and again, "but not as much as you're afraid you might."

With talk of guilt and compulsion we're edging back into cult territory, and GTD veterans tend to use language that reinforces the impression. In a recent thread on one discussion board, people confessed their "weakest link" in applying the system—failing to write down all their obligations, or to

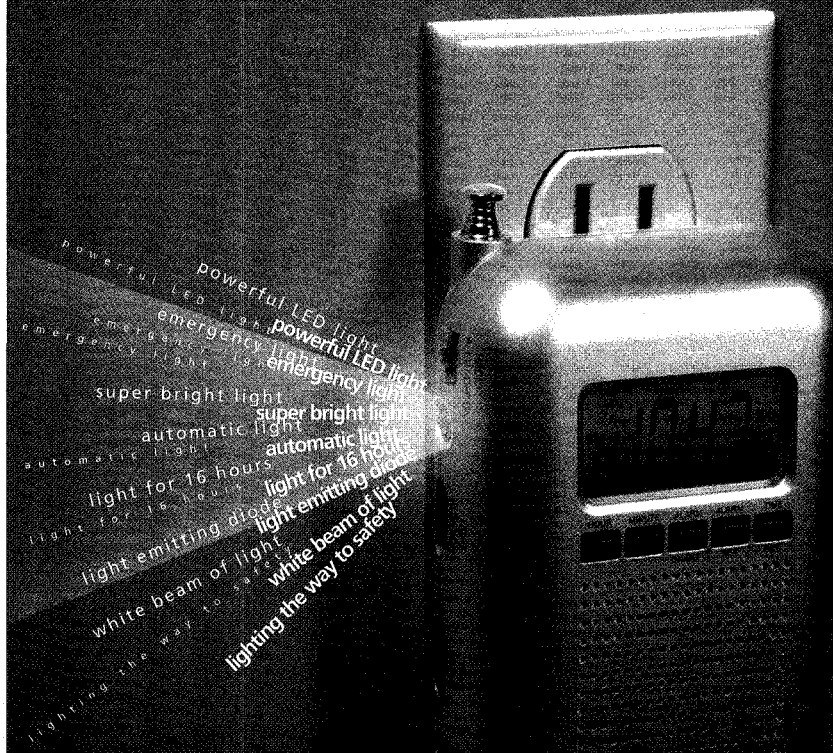
do the weekly review. Steve Lewers, a software-company executive and a friend of Allen's, recently visited Allen's home and headquarters in Ojai to discover whether Allen lives out his own gospel. "I went straight for his closets to see for myself," Lewers wrote me in an e-mail. "Damn, they look like a Levenger ad! And there he is, with the phones ringing, he and his colleagues cool and relaxed, on top of it all! Damn!"

But one reason the system has caught on, I think, is that it offers advantages even if only partially applied. The easiest example is the "two-minute rule." In certain phases of the working day you're mainly learning about possible new obligations—looking at e-mail, checking phone messages, reading memos. If any of the resulting tasks can be finished in less than two minutes, Allen says, you should invariably do them immediately. He carries an egg timer with him to demonstrate the principle. "The rationale for the two-minute rule is, that's more or less the point where it starts taking longer to store and track an item than to deal with it the first time it's in your hands," Allen says. "In other words, it's the efficiency cutoff. If the thing's not important enough to be done, throw it away. But if it is important enough that you are *ever* going to do it, the efficiency factor should come into play, which means doing it right now. This rule is magic." Every seminar alum- nus I interviewed agreed.

Another trick is a process for getting your e-mail in-box back to "empty" each day. This doesn't mean everything gets answered right away—as people who write to me can attest. It means moving through and making triage decisions—deleting much of the contents, answering the messages that can be answered in two minutes or less, and sending the rest to appropriate folders, including "Action" for the ones you have to answer sometime. Provided that you also develop the habit of looking through the "Action" folder often enough, this approach actually brings you closer to being in control of e-mail, rather than the other way around. Allen has lots of similar tips—about filing systems, about planning for travel, and much else.

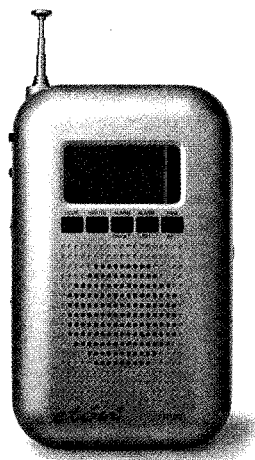
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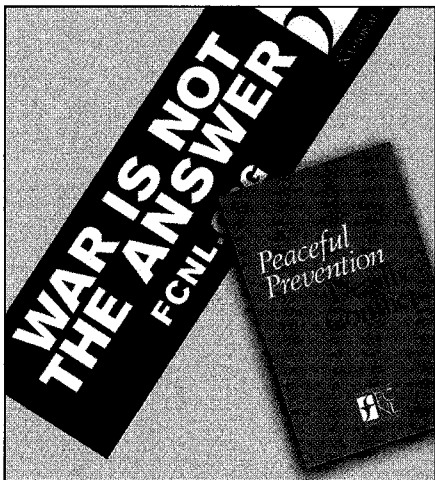


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"The way I describe him to other people is via Henry Ford," Jeffrey Irby, the vice-president of the consulting firm BearingPoint, told me. "Henry Ford didn't invent the car, or the way to build the car. He invented a *system* for building cars in volume. I think of David Allen as the Henry Ford of the information age. He has put together a well-defined workflow process that applies to anyone in a professional capacity." Like an almost wearying number of people I spoke with, he ended by saying, "It has been life-changing."

David Allen is in his late fifties but looks much younger. He reminds me of the actor Dana Carvey, with his sandy hair and slight build. Before beginning his consulting business, Allen had a motley series of jobs and identities. He was a child actor while growing up in Shreveport, Louisiana; a state champion in debate; a graduate student at Berkeley in the late 1960s; a magician; a karate teacher; a "personal growth" trainer in southern California; a waiter and taxi driver; and the manager of a lawn service and a travel agency. Although he doesn't volunteer the details, he had what I gather was an extended dropout period in the 1970s, when, as he puts it, he "explored various metaphysical paths." These combined experiences have made him an accomplished stage performer. His spiel is word-for-word identical in every seminar (I observed parts of three) but sounds spontaneous. He seems relaxed on stage but every so often whooshes into a blur of karate moves to illustrate a point. In context this is impressive (he is a black belt) rather than weird. Indeed, it lets Allen illustrate the principle of "relaxed focus" that he says can apply to work life, too.

From the EST-style personal-growth movement Allen retained the concept of open loops and uncompleted obligations. By the early 1980s he was beginning to apply this perspective to practical business organization. His first big success was with Lockheed, when a key executive attended one of his seminars and then hired him to design a program for a thousand of the company's executives and managers. He

says that half a million people have attended his seminars—most of them in corporate sessions, but some at the "public seminars" he holds around the country seven times a year. Allen's clients have come mainly from what he calls "industries at their 'high noon' period." He means those that are past their initial rush of expansion, so they are large enough to have problems of organization and scale but no longer fast-growing enough to laugh off inefficiencies. His firm has eight other coaches, including his wife, Kathryn.

In his presentations Allen uses the familiar business analogy of the "30,000-foot view." Indeed, he talks about many different vantage points, from the "runway level," where people are applying the two-minute rule, up by 10,000-foot intervals to the "50,000-foot level," where people are considering the meaning of life. It's clear to me, after interviewing him several times in the past two years, that open loops at this loftiest level are what interest him most. "My perspective is that until you have fully fulfilled your destiny as a human spirit on the planet, you'll probably be in some level of stress," he recently told a business magazine. When I joined him for dinner after one seminar in Washington, he said, "Back in the old days I had this naive idea that people would see this cool tool we were offering and say, 'Okay, what else?' We'd have this great big Trojan horse that would march into the staid corporate world and let us find people who were interested in how life is really lived. They'd say, 'Hey, let's go discover God and Truth and the reality that sits behind all this stuff!' But of course that never happened."

He could see me arching an eyebrow, and the conversation went back to the safe realm of e-mail management. "I can help make things work better for you whether or not you buy into the bigger game. You want to operate just at the runway level? That's fine! Let's see how things can get done with the least effort. But if you're interested in where all this came from, where we came from, then we can have another conversation." I'll put it on my list. **A**

James Fallows is a national correspondent for The Atlantic.

ONE SWELL PARTY

Cole Porter's real secret was not the gay life a new film biography will highlight. It was how he made his songs

BY DAVID SCHIFF

.....

Cole Porter had the best ear in the history of American music. I'm not referring to his perfect pitch, which was only part of an innate musical talent that was the talk of Peru, Indiana, by the time he was ten and already turning out songs for friends and family. More important, he heard America singing, and talking, even when he was glamorously expatriated in Venetian palaces, Riviera chateaux, and South Seas luxury hideaways. Porter's swank settings, distant from the sources of American song, made his music chic, chichi, risqué, and artificial—and also, oddly, American. Whether abroad or at home, Porter was an acute observer. His songs are subtly distorting mirrors, parodies that isolate and intensify the rhythms of American speech along with its sexual subtexts.

Thanks to the new film biography *De-lovely*, this summer's air will most likely be filled with Porter's tunes—and what better music to listen to while sipping cocktails poolside? Porter's songs automatically put you in an imaginary musical of your own making. They are totally theatrical, complete with stage set and props. Tropical moons, swaying palms, winter-chilled stars, cozy fireplaces—pure pasteboard façades. The wonder, though, is the way Porter convinces us that the obviously artificial paradise is emotionally real. His songs are often as down-to-earth and all-American as those of his two favorite writers, Irving Berlin and George M. Cohan.

As a songwriter, Porter was anything

but the smart-set dilettante he appeared to be, but keeping up appearances counted for a lot in his world. Every photograph shows him in tasteful surroundings, impeccably dressed and groomed, with never a hint of the chronic pain that resulted from a riding accident in 1937. In New York he lived in a suite at the Waldorf-Astoria decorated by Billy Baldwin.



We might assume that Porter was equally guarded about his sex life, but his homosexuality was an open secret, and his lyrics (in, for example, "You're the Top" or "I've Got You Under My Skin") were full of not very hidden double meanings—touches of "lavender," as he put it. The real secret life was the creative one.

Biographies have little to say about Porter's musical training, although his study of English literature and music at Yale obviously served him very well both socially and musically. His still popular football songs ("Bulldog," "Bingo Eli Yale") earned him a place in Scroll and Key, a top secret society. Later he took some music courses at Harvard and at the Schola Cantorum, in Paris. Unlike Irving Berlin, but like George Gershwin and Richard Rodgers, Porter had classical musical training, though he did not call attention to it. His one foray into a classical form was the ballet *Within the Quota*, with sets and costumes designed by his friend Gerald Murphy. It was first

performed in Paris in 1923, sharing the program with Darius Milhaud's pioneering jazz ballet *La Création du monde*. Porter's score was well reviewed and then forgotten, until recently. It is stylish but lacks the strong melodic profile of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, which appeared a few months later. Porter, however, never developed his classical side; in a sense he never really developed at all. The songs he wrote from the late 1920s to the mid-1950s share a style and approach. Working alone on both words and music, Porter never had to broaden his stylistic scope the way, for instance, Richard Rodgers did when he began to work with Oscar Hammerstein.

When Porter finally had a success in New York, in 1928, critics and his fellow songwriters were surprised by two things: his style was unique, and yet despite his decade of transatlantic life

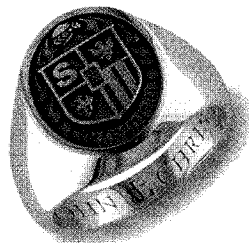
it sounded perfectly at home on Broadway. Hosting extravagant parties in Venice during the twenties (on his grandfather's dime) was apparently an effective way to continue Porter's musical education. His lyrics were as sly and knowing as Lorenz Hart's; his rhythms were as hot as Gershwin's.

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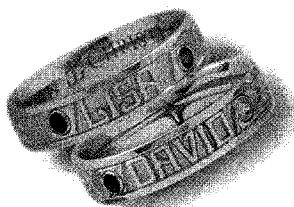
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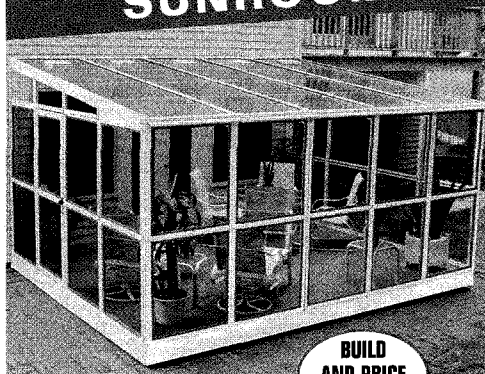
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Porter's first Broadway hit song was "Let's Do It," an endless catalogue of zoological promiscuity (some critics called it a "habits of rabbits" song) that captured the "just say yes" spirit of the twenties. Its musical sophistication matched its verbal aplomb. Porter had immediately broken some of the basic rules of American popular-song writing. Though you hardly notice it, the melody, beginning with its hook, is highly chromatic, and the harmony constantly mixes the major and minor modes in a way surprisingly reminiscent of Schumann or Brahms. It sounds like a simple tune—but try finding the notes and chords on the piano.

Like other Broadway songwriters, Porter specialized in particular genres, most famously multiple-stanza list songs ("You're the Top," "Anything Goes") and smoldering, Latin-grooved romantic ballads ("Night and Day," "Begin the Beguine," "I Love You"). Other Porter specialties were songs that told dramatic or long stories ("Miss Otis Regrets," "Katie Went to Haiti") and simple swingers—such as "All of You" and "Just One of Those Things"—that quickly became jazz standards. But I think the defining Porter genre, which includes all the others, is the pastiche.

To parody a song, you have to listen to it with x-ray ears. You can tell that Porter was listening even when he appeared to be partying, and in particular he studied his rivals. Virtually the only untitled guests he entertained in Venice or Paris during the 1920s were other musicians: Berlin, Rodgers and Hart, and the Gershwins. (He also invited, as an entertainer rather than a guest, the black singer Bricktop.) Even while on the far side of the Atlantic, Porter kept abreast of the latest developments on Broadway. So it's no accident that "Anything Goes" (1934) sounds like "Puttin' On the Ritz," which Irving Berlin wrote in 1929. This is not to say that Porter was derivative; each of his pastiches still sounds like a Porter song and only a Porter song.

Porter's imitative flair is most obvious in *Kiss Me, Kate*, where almost every song is a parody. "Another Op'nin', Another Show" echoes Berlin's "There's No Business Like Show Business," though the gentile Porter gave his tune a very

Jewish "Freylakh" rhythm. "Wunderbar," of course, is imitation Lehar; "Brush Up Your Shakespeare" mimics George M. Cohan. And "So in Love" leans heavily on Schumann's "Ich Grolle Nicht." There are subtler parodies as well: "We Open in Venice" sounds at times like Vivaldi. "Always True to You in My Fashion" sounds like, well, Cole Porter.

Porter offered a frequently cited account of his method that doesn't say much but is certainly demystifying.

First I think of an idea for a song and then I fit it to a title. Then I go to work on a melody, spotting the title at certain moments in the melody. Then I write the lyric—the end first—that way it has a strong finish ... I do the lyrics the way I'd do a crossword puzzle. I try to give myself a meter which will make the lyric as easy as possible to write, but without being banal ... I try to pick for my rhyme words of which there is a long list with the same ending.

He makes it sound as if any of us could have written "Anything Goes." In fact, though, Porter was the most artful of the great tunesmiths: Alec Wilder, the author of the still definitive book on American popular song, even accused him of working from a blueprint. Unlike the apparently simple melodies of, say, Richard Rodgers, which took the edge off Lorenz Hart's lyrics (Porter summed up their formula in four lines: "It's smooth! / It's smart! / It's Rodgers! / It's Hart!"), Porter's tunes match the psychological and social complexity of his words.

The Tin Pan Alley ideal was a song that was easy for people to sing. From the start, though, Porter's songs called for trained, theatrical singers like Ethel Merman, who could put over his tongue-twisting lyrics and make challenging melodies appear effortless. Broadway composers usually kept their melodies within an octave or so; Porter's often extend that range an additional half octave, demanding an almost operatic vocal technique. A typical Porter move—you can hear it in "Begin the Beguine" and "I Love Paris"—is to start a song in a low register and then push the line ever upward until it has an almost Wagnerian intensity. Most of the time Porter managed to disguise his classical impulses

with topical lyrics and touches of syncopation, which lighten the music when it threatens to become sentimental.

Porter's use of pastiche unites the artificial and real elements in his songs. His most obviously contrived works are the extended romantic ballads, such as "Night and Day." Longer in form than the usual thirty-two bars, bigger in vocal range and more melodically chromatic than the Broadway authorities would normally allow, these are quasi art songs or arias. And yet two elements undercut the kind of pretentiousness that some critics dislike in Jerome Kern's artier numbers, such as "The Song Is You": the vaguely Latin beat keeps at least one foot of the music on the dance floor and out of the opera house, and the lyrics subtly (at first) let some fresh air into the hothouse. We start onstage.

*Night and day you are the one,
Only you beneath the moon and
under the sun,*

After the next phrase we move away from the potted palms into a real setting.

*In the roaring traffic's boom,
In the silence of my lonely room,*

Then the words get a little racy.

*Night and day under the hide of me
There's an, oh, such a hungry
yearning burning inside of me,*

And then, finally, we get down to earth with plain English.

*And its torment won't be through
'Til you let me spend my life
making love to you.*

Porter's command of innuendo and inflection in both music and speech gives his songs life where you don't expect to find it. Listen to a song that offers us a peek into high society—"Well, Did You Evah!" The joke starts with the tempo, marked "Tempo di Polka." There's nothing very high-society about a polka, but in fact the music sounds like a silly, giddy gavotte.

*Have you heard the coast of Maine
Just got hit by a hurricane?*

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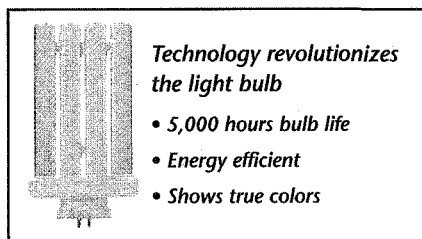
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*Well, did you evah!
What a swell party this is.*

For the words "swell party" the music suddenly syncopates, like ragtime. This is American "society," after all—not far from an Elks Club meeting. Cavotte to polka to ragtime: it's a triple play of social nuance worthy of Sinclair Lewis.

Philip Furia, my favorite scholar of Broadway lyrics, says that Porter's wit turned into schmaltz whenever he wrote a romantic ballad. Call me a sap, but I find songs like "Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye" and "I Concentrate on You"—or even that parody of itself, "I Love You"—as psychologically compelling as the snappier "Just One of Those Things" or "It's All Right With Me." Because so much of his music is about façades, Porter has a unique ability to get beneath the surface; but it's a shock when a dandy walks emotionally naked. The self-conscious theatricality of the "Ev'ry Time" lyrics

*Why the gods above me
Who must be in the know
Think so little of me
They allow you to go*

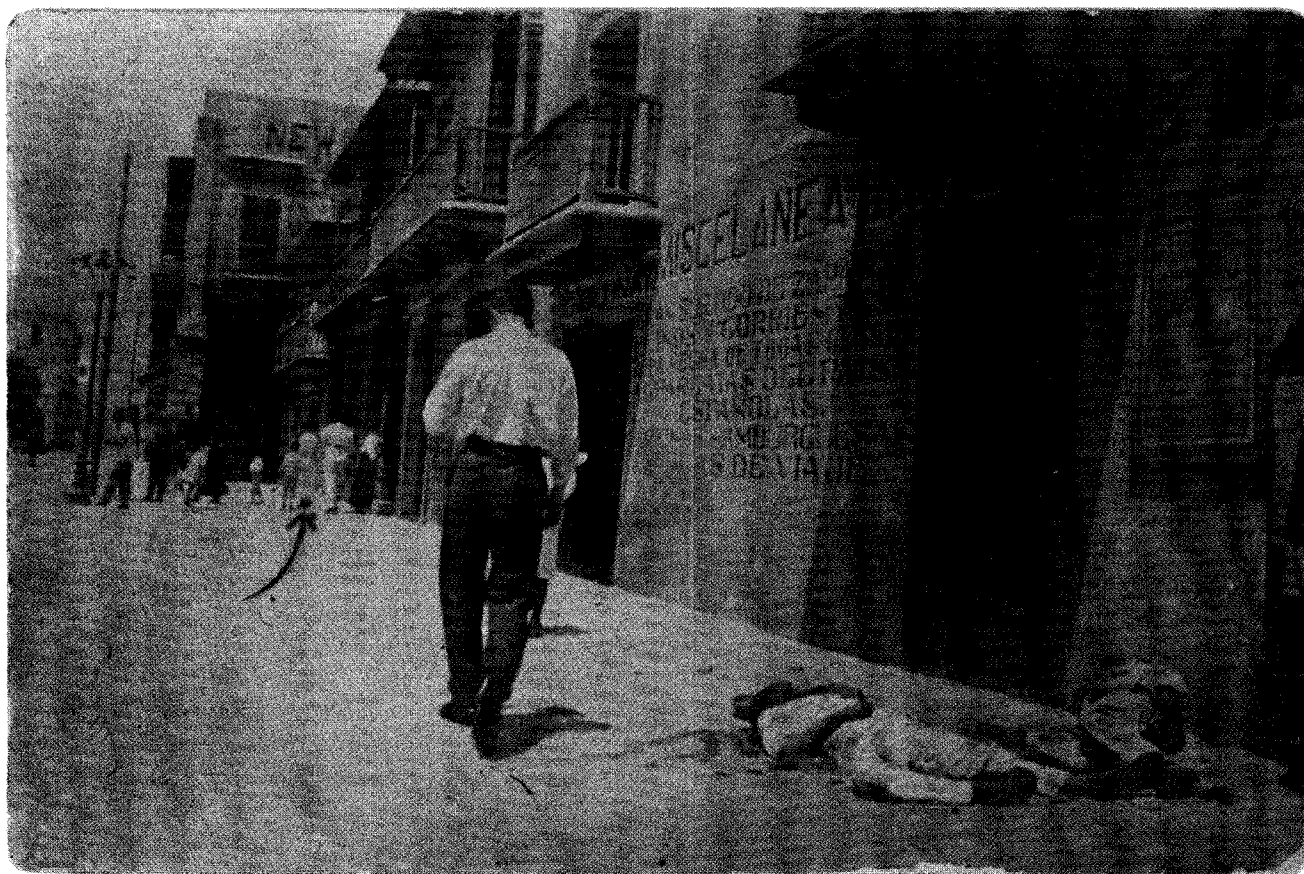
emphasizes the warmth of the melodic lines, and musical wisdom always trumps verbal wit. Porter tells us that he knows what he is doing in the lines

*There's no love song finer
But how strange
The change
From major to minor ...*

It is another form of pastiche—a song about songs, music about music.

And so back to Cole Porter's perfect ear. Like Charles Ives, the "rich-rich" (Porter's term for the truly rich, as opposed to provincial trust-fund babies like himself) Yale composer of the previous generation, Porter must have listened closely to the whole sweep of American music, from the circus ("Be a Clown") to the Met ("Wunderbar"), from the bandstand to the boudoir. There are even cowboy songs ("Don't Fence Me In") and gospel songs ("Blow, Gabriel, Blow"). Musicological archaeologists of the distant future will be able to reconstruct much of our musical culture—and throw one swell party—out of just his songbook. ▀

David Schiff is a composer who teaches at Reed College, in Portland, Oregon.



FICTION

THE ONE IN WHITE

"Captain," I say, "you've got about two hundred Mexican soldiers waiting for you in the plaza"

BY ROBERT OLEN BUTLER

.....

Bunky Miller caught me from behind on the third day of Woody Wilson's little escapade in Vera Cruz. Bunky and his cameras and I had gone down south of the border a couple of weeks earlier for the *Tribune*. I'd been promised an interview with the tin-pot General Huerta, who was running the country. He had his hands full with Zapata and Villa and Carranza, and by the time I got there El Presidente was no longer in a mood to see the American press. I was ready to beat it back north, but then the muse of reporters shucked off her diaphanous gown for me and made the local commandant in Tampico, on the Gulf coast, go a little mad. He grabbed a squad of our Navy bluejackets, ashore for gasoline and showers, and marched them through the street as Mexican prisoners. That first madness passed quickly, and our

boys were let go right away, but old Woodrow had worked himself up. He demanded certain kinds of apologies and protocols, which the stiff-necked Huerta wouldn't give. Everybody started talking about war. Then I got wind of a German munitions ship heading for Vera Cruz, and while the other papers were still picking at bones in Tampico, I hopped a train over the mountains and into the *tierra caliente*. I arrived in Vera Cruz, which was the hot country all right, a godforsaken port town in a desolate sandy plain with a fierce, hot northern wind. But I figured I'd be Johnny-on-the-spot.

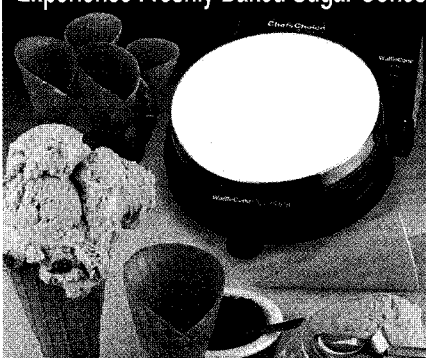
Anyways. That Bunky Miller caught my photo of me. Almost three years later I was in Clyde Fetter's office at the *Tribune*. His steam heat was running behind a gale off Lake Michigan, and we were hunching down into our collars and

blowing on our fingertips and hashing out the details of me heading to Europe to get ahead of things again. I'd be on the docks of Le Havre when our first boys arrived. Wilson would have to pull the trigger soon.

Then I see the postcard up on the cork wall behind his desk. It's surrounded by clippings and Brownie shots and news copy, but it sort of jumps off the wall at me. Clyde's paused anyway, trying to relight his cigar with frozen fingers, and I circle around him and look close.

It's me, all right. Bunky snapped me from behind and I'm walking along one of the streets just off the Plaza de Armas and there's been a gun battle. Bunky had the photo printed up on a postcard back for me, and I sent it off to Clyde. I've inked an arrow pointing at a tiny, unrecognizable figure way up the street, standing with a bunch of other

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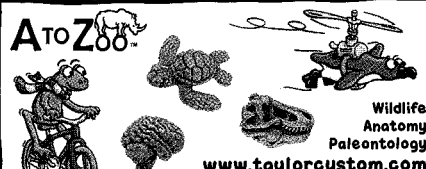
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locals. In the foreground I'm striding past a leather-goods shop. The pavement's wide and glaring from the sun. Even from behind I've got the look of a war correspondent. There but not there. Unafraid of the battle and floating along just a little above it all. Not in the manner of Richard Harding Davis, who came down for a syndicate after the action got started and who wore evening clothes every night at his table in the *portales*. Not like Jack London, either, who was in Vera Cruz looking as if he'd hopped a freight from the Klondike. I've got a razor press in my dark trousers, and my white shirt is fresh. We boys of the Fourth Estate love our image and our wood-chopper's feel for words. It's an image you like your editors to have of you, so I sent this card—even though by the time I did I'd learned a thing or two I couldn't put in a story for the *Tribune* or anybody else.

I pull the card off the wall now and turn it over. I've scrawled in pencil, "After the battle notice the pretty Senorita's in this photo. The one in white does my laundry." I draw my thumb over the words, compulsively noticing the dangle of the first phrase, which was meant like a headline. I should have put a full stop. After the battle. And I've made "Senorita's" singular possessive, capitalizing it like a proper name. Maybe this was more than sloppiness in a hasty, self-serving scrawl on a postcard. It was in fact true that I had no interest in the other girls. Just in whatever it was that this particular señorita had inside her. Luisa Morales.

Clyde takes a guess at where my mind has gone. "Good thing we've got a copy desk," he says, a puff of his relit cigar floating past me.

"If I were you, I wouldn't trust a reporter who bothered to figure out apostrophes," I say. But I'm not looking at him.

I've turned the card over once more, and I'm looking at Luisa, dressed in white, far away. And I'm falling into it again, the lesson I was about to learn seemingly lost on me. Because what I'm *not* looking at in the picture—or even while standing there in Clyde's office, really—is the two dead bodies I've just walked past, still pretty much merely arm's length away. A couple of snipers, also in white, dead on the

sidewalk. That's what they pay us for, Davis and London and me and all the rest of the boys. To take that in and keep focused. I get the head count and work out the politics of it, and I can write the smear of their blood, their sprawled limbs, their peasant sandals, without a second glance. I can fill cable blanks one after another with that kind of stuff while parked in a wisp of sea breeze in the *portales* over a glass of blue agave. If I get stuck finding the right phrase for the folks on Lake Shore Drive or Division Street or Michigan Avenue, I just tap a spoon on my saucer and along comes a refill and inspiration, delivered by an hombre who might end up on the sidewalk tomorrow showing the bottoms of his sandals.

"So what became of your señorita, do you suppose?" Clyde says.

I look over my shoulder at him. He's drawn his craggy moon of a face out of his collar and has it angled a little, like he's sprung a horsewhip of a question on a dirty politician.

I ruffle around in my head trying to think what I may have said to him about her. I'm not coming up with anything. "Did I get drunk around you sometime I'm not remembering?" I say.

"Nah," Clyde says. "Call it a newsman's intuition."

I shrug and look away from him again. But I'm not talking.

She sort of came with the rooms I rented in a little house just off the *zócalo*. I'd barely thrown my kit on the bed and wiped the sweat off my brow with my wrist when she peeked her head in at the door, which I had failed to close all the way. These two big dark eyes and a high forehead from her Spanish grandfather or whoever. "Señor?" she says.

"Come in—as long as you're not one of Huerta's assassins," I say in Spanish, which I'm pretty good at. I figure that accounts for the smile she gives me.

"No problem, señor," she says. "I'll take your dirty things." She's swung the door open wide now, and I see a straw basket behind her, waiting.

"Well, there was this time with Roosevelt in San Juan ..." I say, though it's under my breath, really, and I let it

trail off, just an easy private joke when I'm roughed up from travel and needing a drink.

But right off she says, "You keep that, señor. Some things I can't wash away." She does this matter-of-factly, shrugging her thin shoulders a little.

"Of course," I say. "It's probably a priest I need."

"The ones in Mexico won't do you much good," she says.

She keeps surprising me, and this time I don't have a response. I'm just looking at her, thinking *What a swell girl*, and I'm probably showing it in my face.

Her face stays as blank as a tortilla, and after a moment she says, "Your clothes."

My hand goes of its own accord to the top button on my shirt.

"Please, señor," she says, her voice full of weary patience, and she points to my kit.

I give her some things to wash. "What's your name?" I say.

"I'm just the local girl who does your laundry," she says, and I still can't read anything in her face, to see if she's flirting or really trying to put me off.

I say, "You've advised me to keep away from your priests even though I'm plenty dirty. You're already more than a laundry girl."

She laughs. "That was not for your sake. I just hate the priests."

"That's swell," I say. Swell enough that I've said it in English, and I say something equivalent in Spanish for her.

She hesitates a moment more and finally says, "Luisa Morales," and then she goes out without another word, not even an *adiós*.

I put her aside in my mind and beat it down to the docks, where I find out the location at sea of the German ship, the *Ypiranga*, said to be carrying 15 million rounds of ammunition. Then I stop at the telegraph office, where Clyde has wired me. It seems that half the Great White Fleet is also headed in my general direction, including the troopship *Prairie*, the battleship *Utah*, and Admiral Fletcher's flagship *Florida*. Things are getting interesting, but for now all I can do is wait. So I end up at a cantina I reconnoitered near my rooms.

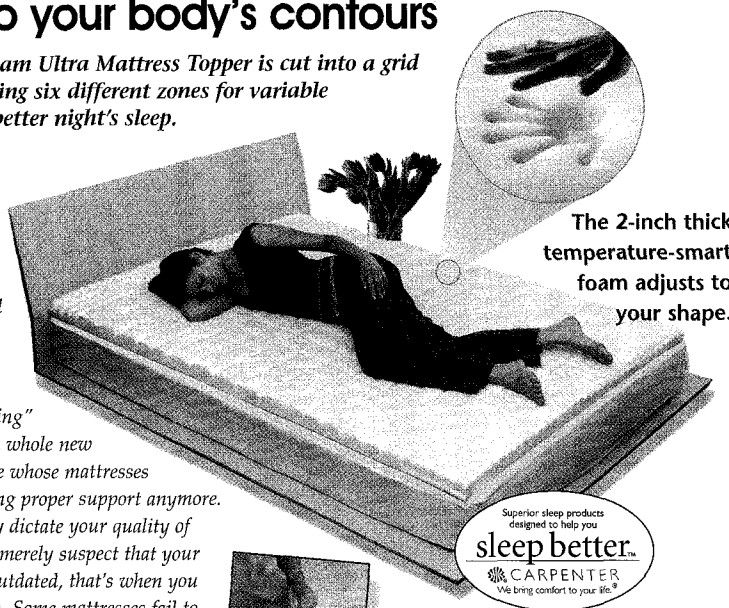
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Not that thoughts of Luisa Morales come back to me while I'm drinking—not directly. I soak up a few fingers of a bottle of mescal and sweat a lot at a table in the rear of the cantina with my back to the wall, and I watch the shadows of the *zopilotes* heaving past, the mangy black vultures that seem to be in the city's official employ to remove carrion from the streets, and I think mostly about what crybabies Wilson and Bryan, his paunchy windbag of a Secretary of State, have turned out to be. I lift my glass to Roosevelt and toast his big stick.

I did that same thing in Corpus Christi a couple of weeks earlier, with a guy who knew how it would all happen. I was waiting in Corpus for my expense money to show up at a local bank. I found a saloon with a swinging door down by the docks, but the spot I always like at the back wall had a gaunt hombre with a stuffed bandolier and a beat-up Stetson sitting in it. He saw me look at him. Coming in, I'd passed a couple of johnnies rolling in the dirt outside, gouging each other's eyes, and I didn't want to add to the mood, so I was ready to just veer off to the rail. But the guy in the Stetson flipped up his chin, and the other chair at the table scooted itself open for me, a thing he did right slick, timed with the chin flip, like the toe of his boot had been poised to invite the first likely-looking drinking buddy.

So I found myself with Bob Smith and a bottle of whiskey. He didn't like being called a "soldier of fortune," if you please, he was an *insurrecto* from the old school, 'cause his granddaddy had stirred things up long before him, down in Nicaragua, and his daddy had added to some trouble too, somewhere amongst the downtrodden of Colombia before all the stink about the Canal, so this was an old family profession to him, and as far as personal names were concerned, I was to address him as he was known to others of his kind: that was to say, as "Tallahassee Slim."

I said, "There's a bunch of you Slims in all this mess, it seems."

He agreed happily, listing a few: Chicago and Silent and San Antonio

and Death Valley. He and Dynamite Slim had even spent time side by side with Villa last fall. Now Tallahassee Slim had come north to regroup and dally with some white women before heading south again. We traded war stories, and I got around to complaining about Wilson, who I took to be a lily-liver.

"Not exactly," Tallahassee Slim said, leaning a little across the table and rustling the ammunition strapped to his chest. "At least a lily-liver has a straight-forward position. This guy isn't one thing or another. You hear how the man talks? Teddy would put his pistol on the table and call it a pistol. Old Woody sneaks his out and calls it the Bible. He preaches about upholding civilized values, stabilizing governments, giving the Mexicans or the Filipinos or whoever a fine, peaceful life. Not to mention protecting American interests, which means the oilmen and the railroad men and so forth. And as for the locals, you simply try to persuade the bad old boys who happen to be running a country we're interested in to retire to the countryside. Problem is, the *cojones* that got those fellas into power in the first place will never let them walk away. So when it comes down to it, Woody's going to go to war. Over a chaw of tobacco, too, when it's time. Mark my words."

So we drank to Teddy Roosevelt, and I did mark those words. One thing I'd learned filling cable blanks from various *tierras calientes* for a few years already was to listen to anybody with live ammunition who called himself "Slim." You can keep your three-named windbags with bow ties.

And I also lift my glass that first afternoon in Vera Cruz to Tallahassee Slim. A couple of times. I drink mescal till it's too hot to stay upright, and I decide to follow the example of those who actually live with the infernal bluster of El Norte and take a nap.

When I get back to my rooms, I find my shirts and my dark trousers folded neatly at the foot of my bed, which leads me to notice a quiet babble of female voices somewhere nearby.

I step out into the courtyard, and Luisa and two other señoritas are under a banana tree, hugging the shade

and talking low. So she sees me looking at her, and she rises and steps into the sunlight, crossing to me but taking her time.

"Señor?" she says as she approaches. "Your shirts are clean, yes? Your pants are pressed just right?"

Even in the United States of America, land of equality, when a girl who works in a shop or a beanery or does laundry, for a good example, gets a little forward, you take it in a different way than you would from a girl of money and fancy family who you meet somewhere official. I've had a few blue-blooded girls say some pretty cheeky things in my presence in this day and age. But the shirt-washing Señorita Luisa Morales standing before me, as beautiful as her

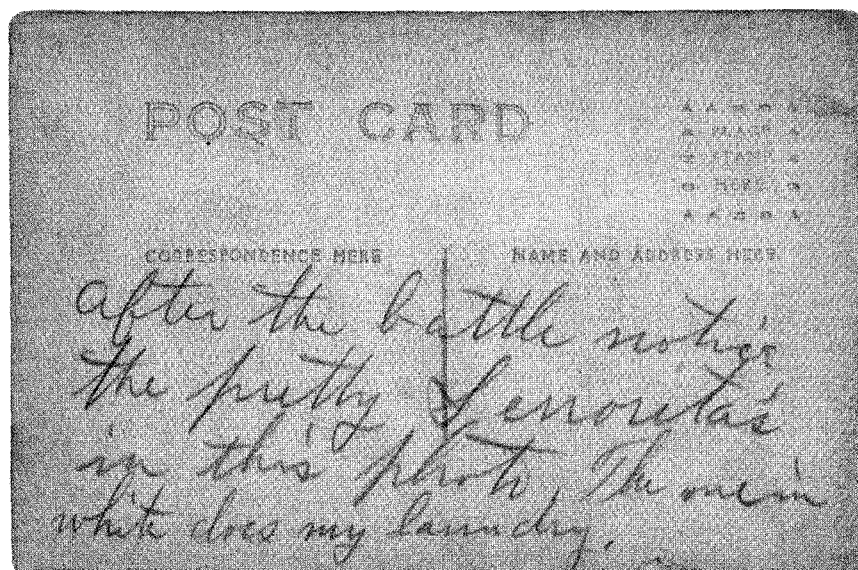
you come on in and we check out the crease in my pants?"

She puts on a face I can't decode. Then I say, "I speak softly and carry a big stick."

Maybe Teddy loses something in translation. Or maybe not. She's gone before I can draw another breath. I remember those big eyes going narrow just before she vanished, an afterimage like the pop of Bunky's flash.

Right off, I have a surprisingly strong regret at this. Not just the missed opportunity. The whole breakdown. But I've still got too much mescal in me, and the afternoon is too hot, so I go take my siesta.

Before I see my señorita again, it's two days later, the German ship arrives,



face is, with maybe even some granddaddy straight from Castile, she's sure no *sangre azul*, and she's already been plenty forward with me, and she doesn't have to get up and come over and ask about my laundry based on me just looking in her direction. So given all this, it's natural to think she's ready to spend some private time together.

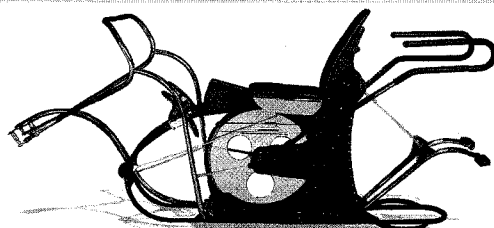
I speak pretty good Spanish, but my vocabulary has some gaps. The few things I know to say in this situation I've picked up in cantinas and a *burdel* or two, and though I figure she's ready for the substance of those words, I'm not feeling comfortable with the tone of them. She has a thing about her that I'm not understanding. So, trying to go around another way, I say, "Why don't

and so does the U.S. Navy. Bunky and I go down to the docks first thing, and the German ship is lying to, just inside the breakwater, with the American fleet gathered half a mile farther out. There doesn't seem to be any serious action out there, and it's only a few blocks inland to the Plaza de Armas. So I figure I have time to write a dispatch to Clyde.

I take what I've decided will be my usual table in the *portales* and even have a couple of beers. Bunky, as usual, is off on his own, snapping what strikes him as interesting, and he swings back to me and gives me a nod now and then. For a teetotaler from Kansas, Bunky is a straight guy. Then, well into the morning, the local Mexican general, a guy named Maass, marches a battalion's

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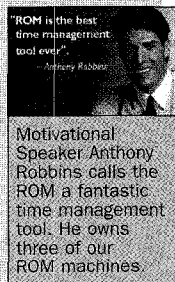
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worth of government troops into the plaza. I figure it's getting time for the offloading of the *Ypiranga*. I'm also the object of some nasty looks from a major on horseback as I finish my beer while the locals are discreetly heading for cover.

So Bunky and I beat it back down to the docks, and it's begun. I count ten whaleboats coming in, full of American Marines, who I later learn are from the *Prairie*. No sign behind me, up the boulevard, that Maass is sending his troops down to meet them. I've got my notebook and pencil stub in hand, and Bunky takes off to find his camera angles.

It all goes fast and easy for our boys and for me during the next hour or so. The Marines, who number about two hundred, are followed by almost the same number of bluejackets from the *Florida*, and they bring the admiral's Stars and Stripes with them. We take the Customs House without a shot being fired.

I'm still waiting for the Mexicans to come down and put up a fight, but there's no sign of them. Meanwhile, a bunch of locals are gathering on the street to watch. A peon in a serape and a sombrero calls out "Viva Mexico" and throws a rock, and even before the rock clatters to the cobblestone street, twenty yards from a couple of riflemen, he's hightailing it away. The riflemen just give him a look, and the crowd guffaws, and it's all turning into a vaudeville skit.

Then a detachment of Marines clad in khaki and wrapped with ammunition start to march through the street along the railway yards. They turn like they're heading for the plaza. I signal Bunky and take off after them. They're going down the center of the cobbled street, the *xopilotes* hop-skippping out of their way and giving them a look over their shoulders like these guys could be lunch. I'm hustling hard and gaining on the Marines, and they're passing storefronts and balconied houses. Mexicans are strung along the street, watching like it's the Fourth of July.

Just as I'm about to overtake the captain in charge of the detachment, I see Luisa. She's up ahead with some other señoritas, but she's standing by herself and she's dressed in white and she's standing stiffly with her chin lifted

just a little. But I've got a man's business to do first. I'm up with the captain, and I slow to his pace, and he gives me a quick, suspicious look when I first come up, but then he sees I'm American.

"Captain," I say, and I lift my arm to point up ahead. "You've got about two hundred Mexican soldiers waiting for you in the plaza."

He gives me a quick nod of thanks and turns his face to halt his detachment, and at that moment I look toward Luisa, who is just about even with me, but I pass her with my next step and my next, and I slow down, even as the detachment is coming to a halt, and it registers on me that Luisa has been watching me closely, and I feel a good little thing about having her attention, but at that moment the gunfire starts. The crack of a rifle, and another, and a double crack, and the Marines are all shifting away, and I spin around, knowing at once that the rifles are up above, that the Mexicans are on the roofs, and Luisa has her face lifted to see, and I leap forward one stride and another, and my arms open and I catch her up, Luisa Morales, I sweep her up in my arms and carry her forward and she's impossibly light, and I press us both into the alcove of a bakery shop, the smell of corn tortillas all around us.

"Stay down," I say, and I put my body between the street and her, and I realize I've spoken in English. "They're firing from the roofs," I say in Spanish. "Don't move."

She doesn't. But she says, "They're not shooting at me."

"Anyone can get hit."

"They're shooting at you," she says.

"I'm all right," I say. "This is old news to me."

A rifle round flits past my ear—I can feel the zip of air on me—and it takes a bite out of the wall of the alcove. I twist a little to look into the street—I'm missing the action, this is news happening all around me—and as soon as I do, I feel Luisa slip out past me and she's moving quickly along the storeline, heading away. Another round chunks close in the wall and I can't do anything about my spunky señorita, so I press back into the alcove to stay alive for the afternoon.

It isn't a bad spot, actually, to watch the skirmish. The Marines do a quick job of sharpshooting the Mexicans, some of them falling to the pavement below, and others going down on the roofs or beating a fast retreat.

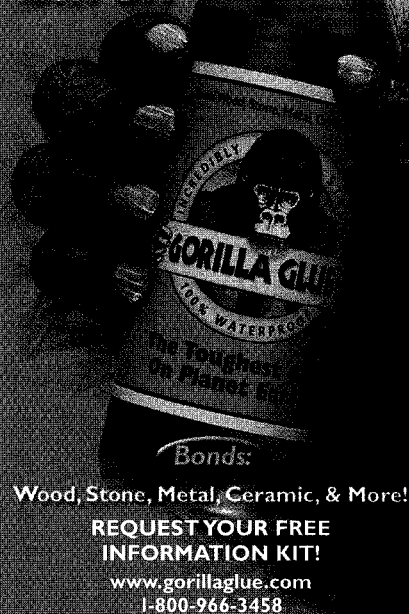
Then it's over. I step out of the alcove. Bunky is coming up from the direction of the docks, and he's doing his camera work. I stay with the Marines while they regroup and tend to a couple of the wounded. The Mexicans on the roofs turned out to be poor shots, and the Marine captain thinks they weren't regular troops. Meanwhile, a scout comes up and says that Maass's men have moved out of the plaza and off to the west. Later in the day the Mexicans will go over the hills on the western outskirts of town to flank the battalion of Marines in the railway yards and along Montesinos Street by the American consulate. The boys on the *Florida* will see what they're doing and break them up with the ship's guns, and Maass and his men will all run away.

But for now the Marines muster and march off toward the plaza, and I cross onto the wide sidewalk in the sunlight and saunter in the same direction. I'm starting to shape a lead paragraph in my head. I pass a couple of dead Mexicans. I've seen plenty of dead bodies. My business is getting stories. You're dead and your story's over.

Then up ahead I notice a figure in white. I'm very glad to see her. She got through the bullets okay. I head for Luisa, and she sees me coming. I'm still not within talking distance, and she says something to the girl next to her and moves off. I stop. The girl Luisa spoke to looks at me with a blank face and then looks away. I'm not a masher. A little dense sometimes, maybe. I'm ready to leave Luisa Morales entirely alone, if that's what she wants.

Early the next morning, long before sunrise, I wake abruptly to the scratch of a match. I turn my face and see a candlewick flare up and glide to the night table, and before I can quite comprehend it all, the business end of a pistol barrel is resting coldly on my left temple. Floating in the candlelight is Luisa's face.

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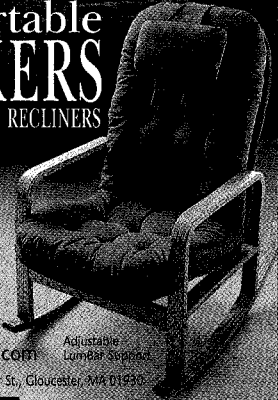


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"You were working for them," she says.

"Who?"

"The American invaders."

I'm reluctant to get into a political argument with my laundry girl who has a pistol pointed at my head. I choose my words carefully. "I'm a newsman," I say.

"I saw you with the American officer, directing him."

The pistol is getting heavier. If her weapon is cocked and her bearing in on me is unconscious, her tired hand could do something it doesn't necessarily intend. I try not to think about that. There are some other pressing issues. For one thing, her attitudes aren't adding up. I need to talk to her about this, but I have to make the point carefully. I don't remind her of her hatred of Mexican priests—they're all I can think of in her culture that might speak against her pulling the trigger. But I bring up the logical next thing. "I don't think you're a supporter of General Huerta," I say.

"I hate Huerta. Do you take me for a fool?" She nudges my head with the pistol in emphasis.

"No. Of course not. But these Americans. They're here to help free Mexico of Huerta. That's all."

"Did you see who was dead in the streets?" she says.

Lying sweating in my bed, a pistol muzzle to my temple, I'm still unable to set aside the impulse to deal in either the literal facts or the political rhetoric that are goods of my trade. Rhetoric would be dangerous, and I'm short of facts. I didn't look closely enough to identify the bodies. I'm not saying anything, and I feel an agitation growing in Luisa. I feel it in the faint, nibbly restlessness of the steel against my head.

"Did you see who was dead in the streets?" she says again, very low, nearly a whisper.

"No," I say.

"Mexicans," she says, and she cocks the hammer.

My breath catches hard in my chest and I wait. She waits too. Weighing my Americanness, I suppose. Weighing my life. Charting a path for herself.

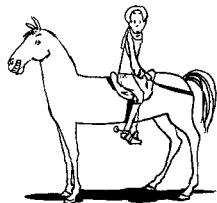
Then the hammer uncocks and clicks softly back into place. The muzzle draws off my skin. The candle flame

vanishes in a puff of her breath, and I lie very still as she slips through the dark and out of the room and out of the life she's left for me.

Not that my lead paragraphs the next day and the next are any different from what they would have been. The weeks go on, and General Huerta resigns and is exiled to Long Island. Venustiano Carranza becomes President. I stay and write more stories, and the band shell in the plaza goes back into business after a week off. German bands play American tunes. Mexican couples return to the ballrooms at the bigger hotels and promenade to the Cuban *danzón*. Down at the docks the Marines willingly restage the taking of the Customs House for the Pathé moving-picture cameras. That newsreel plays all over America as an image of the actual event, and nobody is any the wiser. Seven months later U.S. troops leave Vera Cruz, with several hundred Mexicans dead. Wilson tries to control Carranza over the next few years. And then he takes us into the European war, saying that the world must be made safe for democracy. Not that any lesson you learn is simple. The first Mexican President of the revolution, the one before Huerta, a former big landowner, foresaw his revolutionary future in a Ouija board. And the peasants who rose up in his behalf did so because they were convinced that Halley's comet had been a sign from God to change their government.

But standing in Clyde Fetter's office that cold February in 1917, I took a moment to look at the two men dead in the street. Whatever the madness on both sides, they'd died for their country, trying to help some Americans die for theirs. I gave them a little nod. As for Luisa, I suspect she went off to join up with Villa or Zapata or one of the others. She was a swell girl, and to this day I haven't stopped wishing I could have done something to make things good for her. ▀

Robert Olen Butler is the author of thirteen books, including A Good Scent From a Strange Mountain, which won the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. This story will appear in his forthcoming book Had a Good Time, which is based on his collection of antique postcards.



THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Room With a View

Imagine that the diagram is a rectangular pane of glass in a room offering a view. The sight appearing to you therein will be formed pictorially by the heavy bars, which you must draw. The unclued phrase at 31 Across may clarify the picture. The puzzle is to be solved as a diagraphless; clues are numbered normally, and the diagram's heavy bars will display left-right symmetry. Answers include nine capitalized entries and a variant spelling at 22 Down.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 184

ACROSS

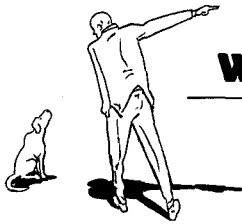
1. Some technobabble weirdly creeps me out
12. Hospital room emcee kept in excellent haven (*two words*)
14. A large group backing current investigator?
16. Lust after bloke on front of *Time*
17. Stringy things in family restaurants
18. Contributor to the Baltic Sea smell, reportedly
19. Molecule that's helical plus reversed
21. Frost's poetic device discussed
23. Bruin skater starts in on Rangers rink
25. Turkish title, one good one
27. In Crete, nine nuts mutually wreaking havoc
28. What to call a man with goulash in the mouth?
29. Among trees, looking back, I appear amused
30. Face the wrong way for sleep
31. *See Instructions*
37. Real brown westbound river of Russia
38. Remain behind article in pigpen
39. Peg's afternoon snack announced
40. Stitch yarn around, left, right, and up

DOWN

1. Ratio, in brief, of carbon and oxygen: not sweet
2. Hotrod—it's not bad for a fixer-upper?
3. Low satellite not fully visible
4. CEO keeps painting hospital room beds in patterns
5. A Parisian opera house not yet encountered
6. Erroneous counts in Southwest urban center
7. Tom who acted English excellently
8. Competition for early care out of hand (*two words*)
9. Fish in general going backwards
10. Theater worker, a beauty, feeding small songbird (*two words*)
11. British bigwigs left surrounded by spikes
13. Capsize open container of coffee
15. First exam contains one trap
19. Make room for college housing
20. A good Italian fellow in the first family
22. Soldier's ways of operating thingumbobs
24. Blackbird in panic
26. Take back ring again
32. Column of light Confederate soldiers cut off at the front
33. "Love Two Times" is a Hall of Famer
34. Herb for New Orleans specialty on the tongue
35. Individual note with high emotion
36. Mom, beginning to place face

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving visit www.theatlantic.com/issues/puzzclue.htm or send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.

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WORD FUGITIVES

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

When you're standing in line, if you observe that other lines are moving faster than yours, what would you call that observation? A term for it was one of the word fugitives sought in March. A number of readers, however, got sidetracked by the question of whether the perception was grounded in reality: is such an observer delusional or bravely facing the truth?

Richard Bagby, of Las Cruces, New Mexico, wrote, "If two persons simultaneously enter lines of equal length, the one in the slower line spends more time there. So on average, a significantly greater fraction of the time spent waiting in lines is spent in slow-moving lines than in fast-moving lines." Joe Touch, of Manhattan Beach, California, wrote, "Often thinking the line next to you is moving faster is called *statistics*. Consider your line, the one to your left, and the one to your right as a set of three. The chance that you will be in the fastest line, all other things being equal, is one in three, or 33 percent." And Nathan Perez, of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, invoked Einstein's theory of relativity before explaining, "The line you are in appears slower because when you look ahead, your movement equals that of those in your line. For all intents and purposes, you are not moving at all. A possible term might be *express relativism*: when you are in the express lane, it is no longer express."

Other readers felt that our subject of inquiry was conceptually akin to Murphy's Law—"If anything can go wrong, it will." Several people pointed out that the principle that the other line always moves faster is sometimes called *Ettore's Observation*. (None of them, and none of our usual sources, seemed to know who Ettore? Ettore? is or was.) This even has a corollary: If you switch lines, the line you were in will begin moving faster.

Srila Nayak, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, felt—uniquely—there was something

poetic about the observation in question. Inspired by Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken," Nayak suggested the term *Frost's Law* and explained: "The poem's lines 'Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, / And sorry I could not travel both / And be one traveler' present the dilemma surrounding mutually exclusive choices. Read in its entirety, the poem brings home the lingering doubts following a choice and persistent thoughts about the choice not made—in this situation about lines at a fast-food outlet."

In general, respondents found the common American word *line* a less



thought-provoking starting point than its primarily British English equivalent, *queue*. A number suggested *misqueue*; a few suggested *disqueueitude*. Alan Horoschak, of Sitka, Alaska, suggested a *queue anxiety*; Russ Hurd, of Copley, Ohio, *perqueueetion complex*; Bernard Goldhirsch, of East Hampton, New York, *piqueue*; Fran M. Grove-White, of Toronto, Ontario, *unluqueuey*; Jeffrey J. Forster, of Pittsburgh, *queueeriosity*; and Geoffrey Andersen, of Oakland, California, *quevetousness*.

Top honors, however, go to Glenn Thomsen, of Appleton, Wisconsin, for *misalinement*, a down-to-earth, distinctly American coinage that doubles as a term for standing in an objectively slower line and as a term for the unverified ob-

servation that one seems to be doing so.

The second fugitive sought in March was "a term that describes the momentary confusion experienced by everyone in the vicinity when a cell phone rings and no one is sure if it is his/hers." Paul Holman, of Austin, Texas, suggested *conphonesion*; Pam Blanco, of Warwick, Rhode Island, *phonundrum*; Alan Tobey, of Berkeley, California, *ringchronicity*; Jim Hutt, of Blue Mountain Lake, New York, *ringmarole*; William A. Browne Jr., of Indianapolis, *ringxiety*; and Gordon Wilkinson, of Mill Bay, British Columbia, *fauxcellarm*.

Taking top honors is Michael W. Pajak, of Portland, Maine, for being the first of many readers to suggest the apt coinage *pandephonium*.

Now SAM ALZHEIMER, of Augusta, Georgia, writes, "I imagine that nearly everyone who owns a car has had to quickly clear the clutter from the front seat to accommodate an unexpected passenger. My fiancée and I have searched fruitlessly for a word that describes tidying on the go."

And TIM IRVINE, of Fremont, California, seeks "a word to describe the feeling one experiences when stepping off a curb without knowing it." He adds, "The feeling only lasts until your foot touches the ground—but what a feeling it is."

Send words that meet Sam Alzheimer's or Tim Irvine's needs to *Word Fugitives*, The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or visit the *Word Fugitives* page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by August 31. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you'd like The Atlantic's help in finding. Letters become the property of *Word Fugitives* and may be edited.

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic authors. The next installment's correspondents will be sent Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver, by Scott Stossel; Faith: Short Fiction on the Varieties and Vagaries of Faith, edited by C. Michael Curtis; and my own Your Own Words.

GREG CLARKE



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by BENJAMIN HEALY

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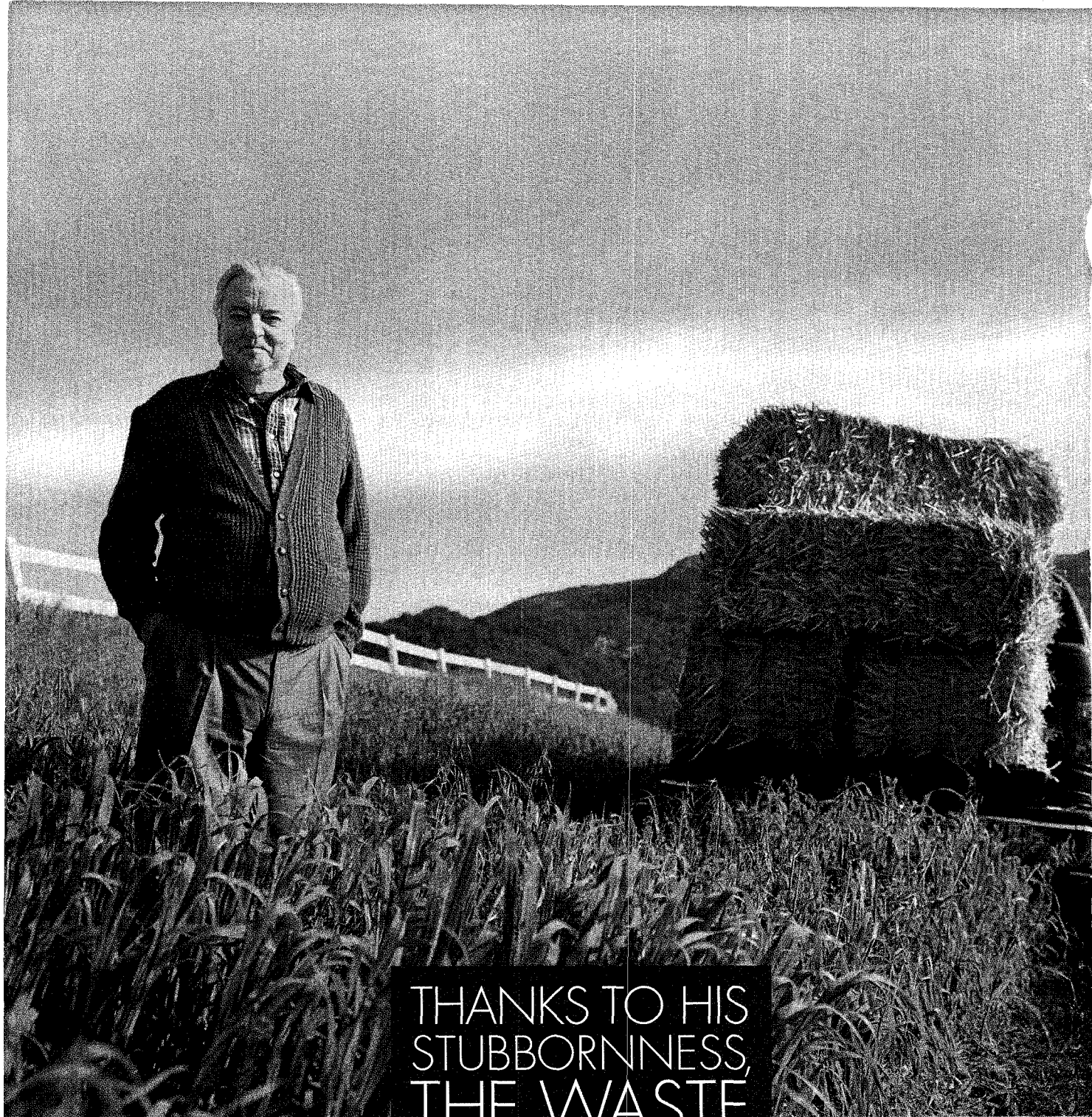
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